POEMS AND DRAMAS

GEORGE CABOT LODGE

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.

Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

POEMS AND DRAMAS
OF
GEORGE CABOT LODGE

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I

POEMS AND DRAMAS

OF

GEORGE CABOT LODGE

VOLUME I

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1911

COPYRIGHT, 1898, BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
COPYRIGHT, 1902, BY CAMERON, BLAKE AND COMPANY
COPYRIGHT, 1904, BY GEORGE CABOT LODGE
COPYRIGHT, 1911, BY ELIZABETH LODGE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published October 1911

THE SONG OF THE WAVE AND OTHER POEMS

POEMS (1899–1902)

CAIN

CONTENTS

Introduction, by Theodore Roosevelt . . . xiii

The Song of the Wave and other Poems

Exordium 3

A First Word 4

The Ocean Sings 5

The Song of the Wave 7

The East Wind 10

The Norsemen 12

"Was hat man dir, du armes kind, gethan?" 15

The Song of the Sword

Prelude 16

Invocation 18

The Song 19

After-Word 21

Ballad 25

Dawn 27

Sunset 29

The Gates of Life 30

Mothers of Men 36

Love in Age 38

A Memory 41

Age 43

Evening 45

To a Woman 46

CONTENTS

THE END 47

NÉANT 49

YOUTH 51

SERENADE 52

SONG 53

SONG 54

"OR POSERAI PER SEMPRE, STANCO MIO COR" . 55

THEY 57

TO A BUST OF THE MATER DOLOROSA . . . 59

TO PSYCHE 61

THE WILL 63

TUCKANUCK

1. SONNET 66

2. SONNET 67

3. STANZAS 68

4. WIND OF TWILIGHT 69

PASTORAL 70

FALL 72

SONNETS

I. TO SILENCE 74

II. TO THE EARTH 75

III. ESSEX. — 1 76

IV. ESSEX. — 2 77

V. SONNET 78

VI. FOG AT SEA 79

VII. NIRVANA. — 1 80

VIII. NIRVANA. — 2 81

IX. PASSING DAYS 82

CONTENTS

X. On an Æolian Harp 83
XI. The Sphinx 84
XII. Sonnet 85
XIII. To the Memory of W. H. P. . . 86
XIV. Insomnia 87
XV. Sonnet 88
XVI. Sonnet 89
XVII. The Gate of Dreams 90
XVIII. To Giacomo Leopardi 91
XIX. To J. T. S. — (After reading "Amis et Amile") 92
XX. To the Children of the Muse . . 93
XXI. L'Enfant du Siècle 94
XXII. Aux Modernes. — 1 95
XXIII. Aux Modernes. — 2 96
XXIV. Sonnet 97
XXV. To a Statue 98
XXVI. A Dream 99
XXVII. "Eli! Eli! Lama Sabacthani!" . . 100
XXVIII. Dante 101
XXIX. Love. — 1 102
XXX. Love. — 2 103
XXXI. Sonnet 104
XXXII. Sonnet 105
XXXIII. Sonnet 106
XXXIV. Sonnet 107
XXXV. Sonnet 108
XXXVI. Sonnet without Rhymes . . . 109

XXXVII. Too Soon 110
XXXVIII. Too Late 111
XXXIX. The Night-Wind 112
XL. Sonnet 113
A Last Word 114
Poems (1899–1902)
To W. W. 117
Outward 118
The Voyage 120
A Song for Waking 122
The Greek Galley 126
The World's too Long about Us . . 131
Les Bourgeois 133
A Song for Revolution 135
The Heritage 140
The Passage 143
Day and Dark 147
Retrospect 149
Sonnets 152
Ode to the Sea 160
Ode to the Earth 163
The Journey on 168
For E. L. 171
The Sonnets of Ishtar 185
Ad Servam 188
Tannhäuser to Venus 194
Twilight 197
Song 199

CONTENTS

Sonnets 201
Death in Youth 206
Lullaby 208
After Death 210
Women 214
At Daybreak 218
The Final Word 220
To C. L. G. 221
The Song of Man 222
Cain: a Drama 229

INTRODUCTION

My intimate friendship with George Cabot Lodge lasted for a quarter of a century. It began when I first saw him, a handsome, striking-looking boy, of great promise, at Nahant in the Spring of 1884; it did not end when I last saw him, on the 4th of March, 1909, at Washington, when he came through the blizzard to say good-bye. He was then in the still vigorously growing maturity of his powers, in the midst of a performance which more than made good his early promise and which was itself the promise of performance greater still.

Of all the men with whom I have been intimately thrown he was the man to whom I would apply the rare name of genius. He was an extraordinary student and scholar; he walked forever through the arch of the past experience of all the great minds of the ages. Any language which he cared to study was his, and he studied every language which held anything he wished. I have never met another man with so thorough and intimate a knowledge of so many great literatures, nor another man who so revelled in enjoyment of the best that he read. He never read for any reason except to find out something he wished to know, or, far more frequently, to gratify his wonderful love,

his passion, for high thought finely expressed. A great poem, a great passage in prose, kindled his soul like a flame. Yet he was unaffectedly modest about the well-nigh infinitely wide knowledge, as deep as it was wide, in which his being was steeped. It seemed as if he did not realize how very much he knew. He never made any show of it; unless it came out incidentally and naturally no one ever knew of it; indeed he was really humble-minded in the eager simplicity with which he sought to learn from others who had not even a small fraction of his hoarded wealth of fact and thought.

He was more than a book-man. He loved his friends, he loved the life of human interest, and the throbbing pulse-beat of cities. He loved also the breath of the open; and he knew the joy which comes in the strife of hardy adventure. As a boy and young man he was a bold and good rider; he was equally at home hunting alone on the vast Western plains, and, also alone, wild fowl shooting in the dangerous winter seas off the New England coast. His combination of idealism and bodily prowess made it inevitable that he should strain every nerve to get into the Spanish War. He came of fighting stock; his forefathers had fought in every great American War; kinsfolk of his were to be in this one; and he simply could not stay out. He went into the Navy as an ensign and served as captain of a guncrew. He made an admirable officer,

training his men with unwearied care, and handling them with cool readiness under fire. He belonged to the gallant brotherhood of the men who have written and fought, the brotherhood whose foremost figures number, among many, many others, Cervantes at Lepanto, Sydney in the Low Countries, Koerner, the man of sword and song, in the war for German freedom. But here again what young Lodge did seemed to him so natural that, so far as his friends could tell, he never even thought of it afterwards. It was to him a matter of course that he should serve when his country called, just as a generation before young Shaw and young Lowell went forth "to dare, and do, and die at need" when the nation girded her loins for triumph or ruin.

To him was given the greatest of all blessings, the love of wife and of happy children; and his delight in the house where he was husband and father in no way dimmed his delight in the house where he was son. He cared little for the perfunctory part of social life; but no man was ever more beloved by his friends, by the men and women to whom his soul was open.

It is not my province to more than touch on his writings. His first volume of poems showed extraordinary strength and originality, and an extraordinary wealth of thought and diction. Indeed at first there was almost too great strength and wealth; the depth and wide play of the thought were obscured by the

very brilliance of the way in which it was set forth. But with each succeeding volume his mastery over his own strength grew. In his last volume, "The Soul's Inheritance," he had fairly begun to come into his own. He had begun to find adequate expression for the teeming wealth of his mind, for his surging, thronging passions, for "the high and haughty yearning" that burned within his soul. He cared only to do his very best; he demanded only the right to be measured by the loftiest standards, to be judged by the keenest and most serene minds; he could be swayed from the course he had marked out as little by love of general approval as by love of gain itself, — and in his case this is the strongest statement that can be made, for no man lived more incapable of mixing sordid alloy with the gold of his work.

In abounding vigor, his task well begun and stretching far ahead, his veins thrilling with eager desire, his eyes fronting the future with dauntless and confident hope, he stood on life's crest; and then death smote him, lamentable, untimely.

He lived detachèd days;
He servèd not for praise;
For gold
He was not sold;

Deaf was he to world's tongue;
He scornèd for his song
The loud
Shouts of the crowd.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

THE SONG OF THE WAVE

AND OTHER POEMS

" Mais nous, nous, consumés d'une impossible envie,
En proie au mal de croire et d'aimer sans retour,
Répondez, jours nouveaux, nous rendrez-vous la vie ?
Dites, ô jours anciens, nous rendrez-vous l'amour ? "

— LECONTE DE LISLE.

TO THE POET

GIACOMO LEOPARDI

EXORDIUM

SPEAK! said my soul, be stern and adequate;
The sunset falls from Heaven, the year is late,
Love waits with fallen tresses at thy gate
  And mourns for perished days.
Speak! in the rigor of thy fate and mine,
Ere these scant, dying days, bright-lipped with wine,
All one by one depart, resigned, divine,
  Through desert, autumn ways.

Speak! thou art lonely in thy chilly mind,
With all this desperate solitude of wind,
The solitude of tears that make thee blind,
  Of wild and causeless tears.
Speak! thou hast need of me, heart, hand and head,
Speak, if it be an echo of thy dread,
A dirge of hope, of young illusions dead —
  Perchance God hears!

A FIRST WORD

"Come," said the Ocean, "I have songs to sing,
And need thine utterance, as Apollo's self
Needed his lyre to perfume the world
With chants of soul and body, both divine."

"Come," said the Ocean, "if thy soul is fit
To bear my mastery, thy words shall flow
Simple and adequate as human tears,
And all thy discord fall in great accords."

"Come," said the Ocean: and I answered: "Lord
Of song and silence, I have heard thy voice,
And loved as may a man the heart divine;
But still my soul is tremulous and mute."

"Come," said the Ocean, "oh, my tired child.
My lips are delicate with whisper, sad
With endless yesterdays, and marvellous
With myriad legends since the birth of Time."

"Come," said the Ocean, soft; and I, "Beloved,
Alone upon thy breast I heard and knew
And marvelled and was dumb." And then the sea:
"Speak!" And I said, "By what?" and She, "By Love."

THE OCEAN SINGS

I HAVE glorified God in my descant,
I have praised him in tempest and calm,
I have mirrored his proper refulgence
As I slept in the infinite palm.

I have sung till the night was ecstatic,
Till my lyrics woke flame in the moon,
I have sung to the morning's desire
And sheathed in the metal of noon.

When my forehead was furrowed with silver,
When my bosom swelled softly as sleep,
When I wounded the sands in my passion,
When I lisped through the sea-weed at neap,

Through the piteous wail of the siren,
Through the bell-buoy's comfortless moan,
Through the silence that stirs to a sea-bird
That moves in my vastness alone,

I have sung; through the ranges of music
I have frightened and comforted man,
I have praised the strong life that compels me
As what voice in the universe can.

THE OCEAN SINGS

I have sung the great lyric of sorrow,
The splendour of life and the pain,
I have pitied the spirit's endeavour,
The doubt and despair in the brain.

My passion is never senescent,
My sorrow is balm to the soul,
My voice is divine with remembrance,
With peace and commiserate dole.

I have lavished my largess of comfort,
Taken earth in mine arms like a child,
Taught the children of life of its splendour,
Brought their eyes to the light unbeguiled.

I have laboured and none shall reward me,
I have lavished and none shall repay,
If the earth that I serve be ungrateful
My bounty shall never decay.

Could the stars be repaid for their brilliance,
They would fall through precipitous air
Day and night from the summit of heaven,
Leave the universe blackened and bare.

Take my beauty — God's image is mirrored,
Take my pity for Fate's sure control,
Take my song, it is Life's evanescence,
Take my silence, the strength of the Soul!

THE SONG OF THE WAVE

I

This is the song of the wave! The mighty one!
Child of the soul of silence, beating the air to sound:
White as a live terror, as a drawn sword,
This is the wave.

II

This is the song of the wave, the white-maned steed of
the Tempest
Whose veins are swollen with life,
In whose flanks abide the four winds.
This is the wave.

III

This is the song of the wave! The dawn leaped out of
the sea
And the waters lay smooth as a silver shield,
And the sun-rays smote on the waters like a golden
sword.
Then a wind blew out of the morning
And the waters rustled
And the wave was born!

IV

This is the song of the wave! The wind blew out of the noon,
And the white sea-birds like driven foam
Winged in from the ocean that lay beyond the sky
And the face of the waters was barred with white,
For the wave had many brothers,
And the wave was strong!

V

This is the song of the wave! The wind blew out of the sunset
And the west was lurid as Hell.
The black clouds closed like a tomb, for the sun was dead.
Then the wind smote full as the breath of God,
And the wave called to its brothers,
"This is the crest of life!"

VI

This is the song of the wave, that rises to fall,
Rises a sheer green wall like a barrier of glass
That has caught the soul of the moonlight,
Caught and prisoned the moon-beams;
Its edge is frittered to foam.
This is the wave!

VII

This is the song of the wave, of the wave that falls —
Wild as a burst of day-gold blown through the colours
of morning
It shivers to infinite atoms up the rumbling steep of
sand.
This is the wave.

VIII

This is the song of the wave, that died in the fulness
of life.
The prodigal this, that lavished its largess of strength
In the lust of attainment.
Aiming at things for Heaven too high,
Sure in the pride of life, in the richness of strength.
So tried it the impossible height, till the end was found:
Where ends the soul that yearns for the fillet of morning
stars,
The soul in the toils of the journeying worlds,
Whose eye is filled with the Image of God,
And the end is Death!

THE EAST WIND

It came!
Breaking across the giant gates of gold
It cleaved the veils of morning fold on fold,
A fluent sword aslant the early flame.

The sea
Shivered, as waking from impassioned sleep
A naked girl might feel her senses creep
Beneath the winter of reality.

The dawn
Fell haggard and dishevelled from the skies,
The shoreless ocean filled with whispered cries
And through the smothered twilight reared its spawn.

And now
A splash of chilly wind forsook the air
And caught the ocean by its tangled hair,
Bent it, and bit the stigma in its brow.

Alone
The wind of ruin walked from sky to sky —
As when Sertorius put forth to die,
It swayed the void beyond the gates of stone.

And then
It grew almighty and the ocean roared;
The living slime wherewith the world is floored
Hearkened, as in their ships despairing men.

To me
The whisper came, the voice and then the call
Of wanton power, and then, o'erwhelming all,
The passion of mine own infinity.

THE NORSEMEN

These are the men!
The North has given them name,
The children of God who dare,
From the field and the growing tree,
Come down through the crystalline air
Where the sky is a fleece of flame,
And the breaker's crest is as hair
Blown back from the brows of the sea;
These are the men!

These are the men!
Where midnight abides in the land,
Where the sun walks round the earth,
Where the fields of God are benumbed,
There the shadow did give them birth,
Where the waves are tawny with sand
And the miserly ground breeds dearth
And the harps of the air are thrummed,
These are the men!

These are the men!
Oh Merciful what for them?
For thy children with frozen lips?
Then the Lord spake, "I am the Life;

Go down to the sea in ships
Belovèd and dwell in the hem
Of my robe though the tempest rips
Like a sword, for I give ye Strife!"
These are the men!

These are the men!
For they stand in the dawn of things
Full-armed from the ocean's womb;
With their dower of wild great joy
In the pouring sun, in the boom
Of the wave as the storm-flail sings,
Till the waters pulse and ploy
And gape like a snow-fringed tomb;
These are the men!

These are the men!
In the strength of the primal song
As the increate world turned white
They descended and dwelt with the sea,
Like a flower dawn bloomed on the night,
And they knew that their lives were strong,
That life was and should ever be —
Then the sun! — and a pulse of light —
These are the men!

These are the men!
In their youth without memory

They were glad, for they might not see
The lies that the world has wrought
On this parchment of God. The tree
Yielded them ships and the sky
Flamed as the waters fought;
But they knew that death was a lie,
That the life of man was as nought,
And they dwelt in the truth of the sea:
These are the men!

"WAS HAT MAN DIR, DU ARMES KIND, GETHAN?"

Weep nevermore again!
The wind's wild footstep thrills the leaves with pain;
Then desert silence, then the scattered cries
Of frail-voiced children, then within thy heart
A sense of falling leaves through gray linked rain,
Of perished youth with grave prophetic eyes
And strange scant visions of a hopeless past;
A sense of life no older than thou art,
And in thy soul, of bright tears falling fast —
Hush! tired child, weep nevermore again.

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

PRELUDE

In the ineffable days when from the summits of morning,
Through the extravagant noon, down to the murmurous eve,
Lands of the plenteous vine lay in their vernal adorning,
Robed in immutable calm, God's everlasting reprieve.

Lands of imperial sun, lands of enduring fruition,
Lands where abundant the wine perfumed the madness of youth,
Lands where the women and men flamed in the vernal ignition,
Gained through the shadows of sense rays from the ultimate truth.

Where on the tenanted seas flashed the flushed feet of the moon-rise
And stirred the dumb heart with its touch — silent, alone, unconfined;

Where, as to promiseful dawn, scattered the natural tune dies,
Women's bare feet in the dew, women's wild hair in the wind.

Where — O immaculate dream — Hope that endureth forever,
Beauty and adequate peace opened wide gates for the soul,
Where the low lyric of love welded so nought could dissever,
Where there was marble and song, where death was divine and its dole.

There in impossible times, lands of the amorous turtle,
Still, on a porphyry shrine lay the memorial sword,
Sheathed in reverberate gold, consecrate laurel and myrtle,
Cold in the plenty and peace, waiting the hand of the Lord.

Passionate, passive and proud, stark on the porphyry altar,
Menacing, waiting the years, serving an absolute need,
Ever the sword is at hand, lest, when the hearts of men falter,
Rise from the satiate peace sons of degenerate seed.

So there may come to the need, filled with enormous
desire,
One from the mire of men bearing the resonant word,
Then shall the slumber dissolve, shattered as crystal
by fire,
He alone voids the gold sheath, chaunting the song
of the sword.

Then shall the spirits of men wake to a novel refulgence,
Over the marginal sea break an irradiate star,
Flame shall arise in the heart, desire demanding indulgence,
Lust of the greatness of earth, lust of dominion and
war.

INVOCATION

God of the hand and loin and burning heart,
God of the whelming ecstasy and lust,
God of the fretful youth and lifeless dust,
God that art travailed with a vital smart!

God of the earlier races, limbed like Mars,
Epic as Odin echoing bell-voiced forth,
God of the sun-gilt South and iron North,
Symbol of life's impulsion — God of Wars!

Thine, in thy powerful hand, before mankind
Sprang from the womb of nature, blazed the sword,

Forged in the vital heat creation poured,
White from its core and tempered in the wind,

That walked through chaos down the cold expanse
Of lucent solitude from sun to sun!
O sign of life when life was unbegun,
This life of earth where death is circumstance!

THE SONG

When the vortex of Heaven was blind
  The sword
Was framed from a primal desire
That shook thro' the void like a wind;
Then it rose as a shivering fire
And crimsoned God's vision of peace;
Then sank, like the trail of a star,
Down the frail twilight of space
And stood over hell like a scar
Furrowed deep in the forehead of night,
Till the universe called, "There is light,
And life and the promise of war."

Lamping the limitless gloom,
  The sword
Glowed in the saffron of Hell,
As might in a tenanted tomb
Some strenuous memory swell

Over death and illume the dead eyes.
Then — O wonder! — ere ever it fell,
A hand gat the sword in its grasp,
And while earth and sea uttered their spawn,
Far-flung on the ocean of skies,
It lay like the welter of dawn
In the giant immutable clasp.

Then white as the darkness of death
  The sword
Sang like a boreal breath
Blown thro' the idyll of dawn,
Cadenced as steel that is drawn
Tense thro' the crest of a storm,
It exalted the choir of earth,
Singing deep where the heart-blood is warm,
And pervaded the resonant sky
Like the solemn and sorrowful mirth
Of life that is living to die.

And down thro' the legended years
  The sword,
Sonorous with laughter and tears,
Has sung its old epic to man;
And the earlier glory awakes
As when life in its anguish began,
Till, whenever the noon-brilliance shakes
Down the scabbardless steel, joy and woe,

All is blended to passion that has
Neither laughter, nor weeping, nor name,
But love and the lusting for fame,
Even death in its agony, grow
Into life that is, shall be and was —
Life the ichor of earth, the spring-throe,
Ever manifold, ever the same.

AFTER-WORD

Is it this, Belovèd, this the secret? —
Life, the earth life, thee and me compelling,
Life and only life? — Where flowers have withered,
Lavished perfume on the impartial breezes,
Fed the bee and crowned the bush with beauty,
Then, the summer spent, the petals perish,
Then, the spring returned, the sap returning,
Novel buds that ripen to perfection, —
Flowers may fade but never so the impulse,
Shift the scenes the play goes on forever? —
Is it this, Belovèd, this the secret?

Oh, consider! — Sure that life endureth —
Do I kiss thy lips, thine adolescent
Breast of marble, do my fingers even
Touch thy hand, the perfume of thy tresses
Fall upon my sense, thy voice's cadence
Turn concordant all my soul's confusion —

Do I these, or look upon thee even,
Comes a certainty of life's persistence,
Life that speaks in thee, in me, in nature,
Life demanding choate form and substance,
Life pervasive, deathless and enduring.

Is it this, Belovèd, this the secret?
This I sing to, since the word suffices,
This thou hearest? — I strove to sing the man's song,
Sing the earth's song, Life, the strength and splendour!
Thou did'st lean and hark and comprehend me: —
Life abideth, thou must know — a lover! —
Thou did'st know and then, and then — I, pausing,
Hear you question, "Is it this, the secret?"
Hear you ask, "Is life the spirit's answer?
Shall the inward voice be stilled in living?"
Hear you wonder, "What's the good of life, then?
Why endure the pain and natural anguish,
Wherefore draw the furrow, sweat the year-long,
When the winter shuts its jaws of crystal,
Kills the generous spring, refuses fruitage —
This the secret? What's the good of life then?"

Ah, there's still a song — men strive to sing it,
Sing their striving, reach their goal, are silent.
What's the song? — No utterance can confine it
Only silence great enough to bear it.
I who cannot praise thee, thee my woman,

Singing life, as dim as life my verses,
Could I call the winds and waves to witness,
Could I pull the stars down from their courses,
Were I lion-voiced as old Jehovah,
Then my words could be but shadowy symbols;
None may phrase the spirit's simple knowledge,
And the secret and the revelation
Of what is not, where the mind of mortal
Turns to ashes and where life is tacit.

Oh, my Well-Beloved, forget the pæan!
Let the sword-blade and the gold and glory
Warp no longer thine eternal vision.
Seek thy soul, and, finding, cease from struggle;
Cease, forget the song of life and living;
That's the world's way — Life and more and endless,
Copious earth-life in its rich completion,
Life and death and after, Life eternal,
Sapphire pavements and the domes of opal,
Life of blended music fair and fancied:
Only life — what life might be — a vision!

Then the Soul's way: lapse from sound to silence,
Merge oblivious in entire ceasing
In thy nativeness, the matrix ocean,
Thou a spray-drop hung on slippery verges;
Ah! the world's way — thine to be no longer;
Thine the soul's way, thou hast seen and known it!

Like an empty tale the worlds shall vanish,
Frail as dream, and life be quite forgotten.
What of life-songs then, and what of death-songs?
Sound and fury down the babbling ages,
They shall cease, the echoes pass and perish;
On the void the 'stablishment eternal
Bides alone — the Soul's gigantic silence.

BALLAD

She died and lay in her grave of stone,
  Alone in her shroud with open eyes,
And an angel came from the awful throne
  To lead her soul through the seven skies.

He stood at her coffin in solemn mirth
  And called her spirit to leave its sleep,
But her soul replied from the frozen earth,
  "It is not for God that I wait and weep!"

He sought her hand in her silver shroud,
  But her soul looked out from her sunken eyes,
And the angel turned with his forehead bowed
  And rose alone through the seven skies.

And she lay alone in her hearse of stone
  And her spirit watched like a sleepless flame,
And her lover arose from a dream of moan
  And came to her tomb and spake her name.

He whispered, "I come from the world of sin;
  My heart desires, my soul is proud;
Shall I open thy coffin and come within,
  Or lead thee forth in thy silver shroud?"

And the Lady rose in her awful pride,
For her soul was strong with the wine of Love,
And she said, "I have waited to be thy bride,
Though God desired me there above."

And he whispered, "Love, I have come and found!
I have died with thee, for my life was thine,
And our bridal bed is the frozen ground, —
If heaven is lost thou art wholly mine.

"The love of our lives can bear the frown
Of God Himself, though our lives are gone."
And he drew her close while they laid them down
Lip to lip in the tomb of stone.

DAWN

The swoon of night's delicate whisper, the tense wide
stillness of birth,
The holy awaiting of sound in the soul of the slumberous
earth,
The peace compelling our tears for the shame of the
agonized flesh,
Ere creation has riven its grave-clothes and come on
the world afresh.

The dawn that hath come like a song aflame on the lips
of the world,
The grasses' hymn to the dew, and the resonant wave
that is hurled
From the reticent soul of the waters, and about the
death-bed of night
Resurrection pulsating like music, and the heavens
enormous with light.

Dear God! how the pulses beat faster, as, lo! with the
rush of a wind,
From the labyrinth caves of our slumber we feel we
have brought forth a mind;
And the shock as the shock of battle, when our vision
rends the veil

DAWN

As the sun swims in blood on the waters; — 't is the
Life of our life doth prevail!

The exquisite fabric of morning, too pure for the spoken
word,
From the cedar-tree woven with twilight has uttered
the song of a bird,
'T is the wild, pure pæan of pity, ever new since the
world began,
'T is the sadness fragrant with promise — a day that
is given to Man!

SUNSET

The sea a great vague mistiness of blue,
A thread of murmur drawn about the shore,
The journeying of wind across the moor
Even and slow and delicate with dew.
The peace of ancient sorrow come anew,
The resignation of a great despair
And failing of all struggle into prayer; —
The promise of a day is proved untrue.
The choired sweetness of home-gathered birds,
The tall gaunt shadows and the mellow light,
The tirèd leaves that fold against the tree;
Within the heart unutterable words,
The pure compassion of the toward night —
A day that dies and never more shall be.

THE GATES OF LIFE

Held in the bosom of night, large to the limits of wonder,
Close where the refluent seas wrinkle the wandering sands,
Where, with a tenderness torn from the secrets of sorrow, and under
The pale pure spaces of night felt like ineffable hands,
The weak strange pressure of winds moved with the moving of waters,
Vast with their solitude, sad with their silences, strange with their sound,
Comes like a sigh from the sleep of the realmless Olympian daughters,
Widowed of worship by time, at the feet of their father uncrowned.

Held in the bosom of night, with the wind in my face, and the ocean
Stirred thro' its tremulous deeps with the unfulfilled dawning of moon,
As involved in the power of life and ashake with the pulse of emotion
It waited, when slow thro' the void came the primitive promise of noon.

Filled with the open avowals of nature, the choral that falters
Only to swell thro' the channels of song like an affluent stream,
Pure with old faiths of the heart that have died in the horns of their altars,
Leaving their beauty to live like the memories kept of a dream.

Like the fragments of immanent silence, like the dew of immense resurrection
Falls the night on mine eyes, in the curve of my lips the fresh tears of the sea,
And like rifts in the texture of life, like the soul in empiric reflection,
Come the tacit and lingering lapses where the phantoms of Heaven are free.
There is peace in the winds, the invisible pinions of dark, there is patience enduring
In the native and motionless outlines of headland and forest and stone,
There is love in the perfumes essential of earth, the old impulse maturing
To fruitage, and calm in the star-scattered chasms where night is alone.

I am drenched with the night, I am drunk with the wine she prepares for the spirit,

I am bathed in her solitudes, filled with her proper immensities, mad
With the perilous visions of realms that my soul, is it strong, may inherit,
With the simple and adequate bounty of natural things: — I am sad
With the solemn completeness of joy that abides in the centres of sorrow,
The sadness of life understood in its prophecy, loved in its pain,
I am alien to yesterday, held on the heart-beat of time, tho' to-morrow
Return and its temperance fall on my zenith like colourless rain.

I am urged with the germinal ichor whose functional vigour increases,
Subsides and suspires and fashions the world to its purpose again —
For the sands shall be fluent with sea when life's tremulous episode ceases,
And winds from the regions of sunset blow warm with the perfume of rain.
The darkness shall furnish its delicate silence, the destitute spaces
August with disseminate suns shall be heritage still for the soul,

And old memories warm from the heart shall inhabit
earth's intimate places,
When the cool, kind fingers of death loose our bonds
and we leap to the goal.

Tho' life shall return to me, sadden me cinctured with
sin and besotten
With heartless immoderate voices, and stale with per-
version of truth,
I have tasted the lips of the night, the caress of its wind,
and forgotten,
Alone on the bosom of nature, the days that shall wither
my youth;
I have felt with the manifold ocean, with the blind,
blank, lustreless shining
Of starlight, and tasted intensely the crude cold smells
of the earth,
I have put my weak hands in the large hands of nature
that caught me declining
Thro' colourless ashes of thought in the fear of per-
petual birth.

She found me and nourished me, nourished mine eyes
that were thirsty for shadow,
My heart that desired her blindly, my senses diseased
in the strife,
Blurred phases of mortal desire, my soul that replied
to her sad, slow

Power, her promise of ultimate peace thro' the strength
of her life;
Her life that is lost in its bigness and big with the primi-
tive glories,
Can it save from the life that is cramped in the dust-
stifled highways of men,
Can it open the gates of the soul where the vital com-
mencement and core is,
And the soul leave the centres of life and be merged
into nothing again?

Can life save from itself? Oh, Beloved! thine eyes
overcome me, and longer
Than flesh can endure is the kiss on the dew of thy lips
and the flame,
And the old safe landmarks of life are lost in its volume,
while stronger
It widens till sorrow and happiness, virtue and sin, are
the same!
For love is coeval with life and what were divided are
one now,
As we leap in the night, as we plunge in the well-spring
of nature, and then
The world grows coherent with music — Oh, haste!
shall our Heaven be won now,
And the manna of earth changed to food for the ulti-
mate soul-wants of men?

Shall life turn to death in the living? Shall we pass from
the heart-shaken centres
Of nature, the pinnacled crisis and powerful matrix of
life,
That project thro' the cosmical fabric, where the sea-
meadows pulse, where the scent stirs
In flowers that feed the faint breezes, the eternal pro-
genital strife?
Can we pass to the perfect cessation where life is a dream
unrecurring? —
Earth's divisionless ecstasy fills me, till my body is rent
with the strain, —
Oh, Heart! — could the flesh but endure the full splen-
dour of life and enduring
Dissolve in the quiet perfection of death, without hope,
without pain!

MOTHERS OF MEN

Weep, mothers of men!
Out of pain ye have peopled the earth,
And the pain of life is the pain of birth,
With its sordid lust and its evil mirth,
And yet ye have borne and must bear again —
Weep, mothers of men!

Weep, mothers of men!
The toil of body and ache of brain,
The sweat of life at the end proves vain;
Your children leave you to dare the strain,
Your children return to you alien —
Weep, mothers of men!

Weep, mothers of men!
The hands of the world are strong to take
The lives ye bear for the world's sole sake,
To try their souls till they bend or break:
Your children vanish from out your ken —
Weep, mothers of men!

Weep, mothers of men!
For a woman's lips, for the lust of gold,
Your children's honour is bought and sold,

MOTHERS OF MEN

Your children die in the dark and cold,
Your children never shall come again —
Weep, mothers of men!

Weep, mothers of men!
The human heart is the proper sheath
For the dagger of life; ye have blown the breath
Of life in the world and it ends in death;
Your children live and die, and then? —
Weep, mothers of men!

Weep, mothers of men!
Weep and pray to the God whose scorn
Has given ye life that men may be born:
Hearts to suffer and eyes to mourn,
For the crown of love is a crown of thorn,
And your children return to you alien,
Perish and never return again —
Weep, mothers of men!

LOVE IN AGE

It was never more than a face,
An impression merely; a bit
Of failing landscape — her grace
Just caught as the rain-cloud split
And the air grew warm a space.

And now it is many years,
And I, with my thin hair gray,
Face wrinkled — perhaps by tears! —
'T is strange how my yesterday
Of dead youth reappears.

I wonder if after all
I've any right to complain!
As the shadows weave on the wall,
And we feel the wash of rain
Through the light grown thin and small;

As we sit and cherish the hearth,
While the dead come one by one
And mime their long-quenched mirth,
I feel I have grown alone
And cold on a living earth.

LOVE IN AGE

Well, one of the dear mute things
That climb up out of the dark
Is this face, this moment that clings
To life and me, like a spark
That all the dead sunlight flings.

Just rain-starred, blowing grass,
The scent of the fluent air,
Her profile — eyes like glass
That kept a jewel, hair
All mystery — I thought to pass

And she turned — one look to me
Carelessly, then away
Out over the flat gray sea
Where the white squall fled away
And the light broke scatteredly.

And then I knew that her face
Was all in my blood; half-blind,
I paused, eyes closed, a space —
And after? — naught but wind
And the clouds blown fine as lace.

And there — the story 's told;
And hardly worth, you 'll say —
Perhaps to yourself: "He 's old
And wanders" — yet far away

LOVE IN AGE

I know that the days were gold
As the past says, "I shall repay."

And the memory, three parts grief,
Is exquisite and real
With a joy unlived; but chief,
As the warm drops heartward steal,
With a present strange belief

That all we have been and done
And lived and suffered and loved
Comes back as we sit alone
In the old years, sure and proved,
And gives us the crown we won.

And says, "The living was worth;
The little laugh, much tears,
The fight ye fought on earth,
All come in the latter years
More real in a richer birth."

Ah! there's the old, old pain —
I stand in the sultry air
And think I see again,
Dimly, her wind-blown hair
Through the drift of seaward rain.

A MEMORY

"Quel labbro, ond' alto
Par, come d'urna piena,
Traboccare il piacer."

— LEOPARDI.

I REMEMBER but half-aright,
Through the wine, a cloud of hair,
And her breast's dishevelled white;
While a perfume touched the air,
And her eyes grew cold with light.

I remember the colour's play
In the carmine wine, and round
The hush of an infant day
The viol's silver sound
Burn up and sob away.

Behold she comes to me now
And I kiss her naked hand,
For her sin of the lips and brow
And love — I can understand
And praise for the good I know.

Your virtue is sterile as drouth
And vain as your chilly words:

A MEMORY

This woman is all my youth
  Of wine, and the clash of swords,
And a kiss on the open mouth.

So give me her lips again,
  For I care not if heaven condemn,
I have set on the brows of pain
  Her desire for diadem —
And life has been so much gain!

AGE

Art thou not cold,
Brother? alone to-night on God's great earth;
Art thou not cold?
In years of old
The simple, tender, rude,
Strong love of men was thine, the fire-bright hearth
Where now is silence of long solitude.

Art thou not old?
Withered and white in these uncounted days;
Art thou not old?
Thy tale is told,
And quite forgot as thou,
To whom the world flung out a moment's praise,
Then tore the laurel from thy bleeding brow.

Art thou not sad?
Dost thou not feel the welling of great tears?
Art thou not sad?
How grave and glad
They rest, the quiet dead;
And thou — how dost thou live in these dim years? —
Thy heart has begged from God and starved for bread.

AGE

Shalt thou not die,
Brother? the chill is fearful on thy life.
Shalt thou not die?
Is this a lie,
This threadbare hope — of death?
A lie like God, and human love, and strife
For pride and fame — this soiled and withered wreath?

Art thou not cold,
Brother? alone on God's great earth to-night;
Art thou not cold?
Art thou not old
And dying and forlorn?
Art thou not choking in the last stern fight
While in divine indifference glows the morn?

EVENING

The strangled breath
Of life and death
Fails to a lost complaint and dies,
And softer than sleep a tawny light
Furrows with fire the dawn of night
As the moon swells soft o'er the ocean's white
Like love through the desert centuries.

And the long-linked years
Bring their large arrears
Of sorrow and passion and great surmise,
And I know with a sense of familiar pain
That the dead hopes never can come again,
That the lust and struggle and tears are vain,
While ever the future smiles and lies.

TO A WOMAN

How shall it seem to thee when thou art old?
  When this, the dust in which I wrote my name,
And I in memory's twilight lost and cold
  Have grown too unremembered to defame?

Perchance that when thine eyes are dull with drouth,
  Thy beauty haggard, thou shalt think on me
And cry, "His name is ashes in the mouth!
  His name I speak in dying misery."

Perchance thy rage shall sob its full despair:
  "He was more masterful than Time and fell,
Weak in the world, to lie despised and bare —
  In death a chord, in life a broken bell."

Or shall thy pride be mightier and say:
  "He fought and failed and — Peace! the scorn was best!
With his forgotten deeds the years are gray,
  And now his brow I crowned is fallen to rest."

My heart instructs me it shall seem to thee
  In no such wise; thy lips may praise or blame
And leave the heart its loving — thou to me,
  Thy cheek that withers, my forgotten name.

THE END

"Il sempre sospirar nulla rileva."
—Il Petrarca.

I said, "Since Life is old with pain,
Since words are cold and tears are dead,
And nothing now is left unsaid,
And all the strain of thought is vain;

"Since joy by joy the dreadful past
Is paid in agony of soul,
Since held in life's severe control,
Our shaken hearts are mute at last;

"Since echoless and unrevealed,
Beyond, the sad impending days
Shall take us both in several ways,
Thro' worlds of windy rain concealed;

"Since we have stood alone and proud
And paid for every joy in full,
And living touched the flames of Hell
And given life the tears we owed:

"We who have felt the wild lament,
The voids of darkness, cold and pain,

That base the life we hold in vain,
That vainly come is vainly spent,

"May watch alone the myriads pass
Their low and level twilight way,
Where never falls the splendid sway
Of primal truth that is and was.

"The balance only lifts to fall,
The hemlock almost seems divine
To us, whose lips have touched the wine
That makes God's lips grow musical.

"And they, who neither know nor feel,
Are strange to us nor understand —
I lay my lips upon thy hand
And joy and pain grow tense as steel."

NÉANT

"Et toi, divine Mort, où tout rentre et s'efface,
Accueille tes enfants dans ton sein étoilé;
Affranchis-nous du temps, du nombre et de l'espace,
Et rends nous le repos que la vie a troublée!"
— LECONTE DE LISLE.

I TELL you this — each lapse of light
That glares the world from roof to floor,
Shall leave, as days that died before,
This envelope of antient night.

O Heart! this wash of fluent air,
The ocean's calm sonorous stir,
That floods the huge horizon's blur,
Dissolves in silence, like a prayer

That threads the still cathedral's peace,
A rhythmic pathway thro' the grave,
Eternal twilight of the nave,
Whose silences shall never cease.

The fret of youth, the sword and wreath,
The flush of fame, the vernal smart,
The human tears that flood the heart
Are sparkles on the void of death.

NÉANT

For every life returns to this —
We are and are not, one by one,
As zones and systems, sun by sun,
Burn out — the darkness ever is.

Yea, life and light, the sea and star,
Upon the warp of things sublime,
Seem only — Never touched by time
Old night and death and silence are.

YOUTH

If I must die,
The earth is inarticulate to sing
The dirge I crave:
The sorrow of the murmur-laden wave,
The sea-born wind complaining 'neath the sky,
And round my head the waters' silver ring.

If I must live,
And feel the ashes of oblivion
About my soul,
Let life be fearful, let me feel the whole,
Despair, and face the sunrise — if I grieve
Let it but be the tarrying of the sun.

SERENADE

Sleep! for the silver dawn is folded still
Within the sea;
Sleep! for the trees are slumberous on the hill,
The lark is tuneless and the crickets thrill —
To wake is misery.

Sleep! for the heart of God has slept to dream
A better world;
Sleep! for the day is sadder than we deem:
Perchance thy soul shall lapse along the stream
The lotus flower impearled.

Sleep! Oh, my Love, for I am open-eyed
Upon the sun;
Sleep! for I would the heavens were yet more wide,
The stars more limpid, and that I had died
Ere yet the night was done.

SONG

My Love, thine eyes have been to me
Like to a bird that singeth in the night
To one who waits the coming of the light
Through the enormous solitude of sea.

Thy beauty fell upon my mind
Like song to one within a darkling land
Who, with fear on him like a bloodless hand,
Hears the large, hurrying whisper of the wind.

My Love, thy heart is like a prayer
To one who, dying at the gates of morn,
Stirless, in splendid effort and great scorn,
Sends forth his soul to meet the last despair.

And oh, thy Love is as a road
To one who waits in deserts of the soul,
And sees through Life, whose waves of fever roll,
The waking Sorrow in the breast of God.

SONG

Out of one heart the birds and I together,
  Earth hushed in twilight,
Low through the live-oaks hung heavy with silver,
  Gemmed with the sky-light,
Under the great wet star
Shaking with light, we jar
Lute-voiced the silence with intervalled music.

While under the margined world the slow sun lingers,
  Flaming earth's portal,
Over the lilac dusk spreads his great fingers —
  Earth is immortal!
While the frail beauty dies,
Dream in the dreamer's eyes,
All the good gladness turns praise for the singers.

Hark, 't is the breath of life! Hush! and I need it;
  Northern, gigantic, —
Questing the silences, herding the sudden foam
  Down the Atlantic;
Leaves from the autumn's store
Shrill at my desert door,
They and I out of one heart that is grieving.

"Or poserai per sempre,
Stanco mio cor." — LEOPARDI.

SILENT, alone! Around the wrinkled earth
My lips can feel the final heart-throb creep,
While autumn fills the world with solemn mirth
That freights the vine and gilds the ripened sheaves
That summer promised; and upon my sleep
The guardian oak shall drop its pride of leaves.

Silent, alone! Beneath the sleepless stars
This cloven peak shall stand against the moon
In windy solitude, the whispered wars
Of waters writhed in silver at my feet
Shall hush the verges of the world and croon
A sure compassion for my sure defeat.

Silent, alone! The river seeks the sea,
The dew-drop on the rose desires its sun!
Oh, prisoned Soul, shalt thou alone be free?
Shalt thou escape the curse of death and birth
And merge thy sorrows in oblivion?
Thou, thou alone of all the living earth?

Silent, alone! I know when next the dawn
Shall cast its vision through the desert sea

And find me not, the sword that I have drawn
Shall flash between the twilights, and a word
Shall praise what I was not but strove to be,
Saying: "Behold the mercy of the Lord."

THEY

"Oh sprich mir nicht von jener bunten Menge,
Bei deren Anblick uns der Geist entflieht!"
— GOETHE.

THEIR voices die and calmly leave
This interlude of running rain,
This solitude of heart and brain,
This solemn pause and brief reprieve.

And as their voices they shall die,
Dim darkened spirits dulled with sound;
The truth they never sought nor found
Shall give their little lives the lie.

They live for life, their needs are filled,
And in their false and narrow scope
They mock at dream and jeer at hope;
Their foolish noise shall soon be stilled.

They live and laugh and cease to be,
They fade and fall and rise again,
Their scorn is false, their praise is vain,
They live and die unceasingly.

They are as writings on the snow,
That pass and leave no trace behind;

THEY

They mocked the sun, for they were blind,
The Truth, because they could not know.

Have patience! Yet a little while,
Thou, too, shalt pass beyond their ken;
The stupid scorn of vulgar men
May madden, but cannot defile.

If on the fire-forged nether springs
Thy hands shall base the work they do,
What matter if the pure and true
Be bought and sold for meaner things?

For if thro' thee, whate'er the cost,
Pure light may shine in word or deed,
Thy work shall live; thou art the seed
Of what can never quite be lost.

So take no heed of all the loud,
Persistent folly, scorn and sin,
But, where the light has entered in,
Look steadfast, unafraid and proud.

They pass like winds that chafe the sea —
Strive on unvexed with fear or hate,
For calm abides and consummate
The Peace that was, is and shall be.

TO A BUST OF THE MATER DOLOROSA

" . . . et sur nos croix d'ébène
Ton cadavre céleste en poussière est tombé!"
— De Musset.

Oh, Dolorous Mother with the silver tears,
That in the withered day of Jesus' pain
Received the flame of heaven-inspired prayers
Upon thy pale, ascetic lips in vain!

Thou, Israel's daughter, with white arms apart
On Death's dishevelled midnight, felt despair
Weep tears of blood upon thy broken heart
And tears of silver through thy solemn hair.

In vain thine agony grew almost sweet
With pity at His death, and vainly there
The Magdalen lavished on His wounded feet
Her lips' caress, her opulence of hair.

In vain thy Son raised Lazarus from the dust,
In vain He brake the bread and shared the wine,
In vain they wore His sign, the meek and just,
In vain He was a symbol and a shrine!

TO A BUST OF THE MATER DOLOROSA

In vain! Thine image crumbles and is gone,
  Thine hallowed altar is an empty sign,
And these mine unbelieving lips are stone
  That kiss thy dust amid those tears of thine!

TO PSYCHE

Forespent I sat at the morning's gate
And Psyche beside with drooping wings,
And I moaned, "We have come in a world of hate
Where the song-bird songless wings."

And she: "Thou hast lived in the fierce hot light
Till thy mind is gray with remembered things,
But between the stars the air is bright
With a song no singer sings.

"I have waited; mine eyes are liquid for thee,
For thou who wert lost in the elder years;
I have come, and thy passion's throbbing sea
Is salt with tears.

"Too long have we dwelt apart, alone,
I in the shadow, thou in the sun;
Oh, bare thy breast that I build my throne,
For the storm is run.

"Through the violet lustre of my hair
Let a sleep steal over my golden eyes
And I shall forget the tireless air
And the cruel skies.

TO PSYCHE

"Sleep, sleep, and never to wake again,
But ever to lapse from dream to dream
And taste the joy that is near to pain,
Where the worlds not are but seem.

"I am thy soul, God's child am I,
And the day when thy mighty mind turns small
In the simple nearness of the sky,
I shall wake and hear thee call.

"Mine eyes shall unfold in a world of morn,
Through the gates of night by music blown
We shall watch dissolve the world's great scorn —
On the breast of God, alone."

THE WILL

"Was jeder im innersten WILL, das muss er sein und was jeder ist, das WILL er eben." — SCHOPENHAUER.

IT sprang from the brows of a star
And it lives with the life of the world,
It appeared like the lightning of God
Through the dust of eternity hurled.

And much as a luminous thought
May shine through the dusk of a dream,
It awoke in the childhood of light
And crimsoned the twilight with gleam.

It arose in the first blade of grass
That brake the stone mountains apart,
And it budded and blossomed and bloomed
Till it stirred in the human heart.

And the centuries freighted with life
Have trembled at touch of its flame,
And lips where its lyric was warm
Have laboured to give it a name.

It inspires the voices of birds,
The dædalian tremor of earth,

THE WILL

When the passion of increate spring
  Moves the heart to ineffable mirth.

It suspires in scent from the rose
  And in midsummer's satiate rest;
It is rich through the veins of the world,
  Like milk in a woman's deep breast.

It burdens thy murmurous lips
  When love in thy spirit is warm —
My lover the sea, it is thou
  As it thrones in thy splendour of storm.

'T is the pride of the arm and the loin
  That thrives in the sinews of war,
And puts forth in the whiteness of death
  Like life in the dawn of a star.

And though life is grown tired and old,
  And the treasures of heart and of soul
Are sold for a handful of coin,
  It stirs with a vital control

In man and in woman and earth,
  As on Sappho's lips haunted with flame,
Or as under the hand of the Christ
  It burned — it is ever the same.

And while ever the sunrise returns
  It shall still be the power that can
Make the heart to grow pallid with love
  Or a man die the death of a man.

TUCKANUCK

I

I AM content to live the patient day:
The wind sea-laden loiters to the land
And on the glittering gold of naked sand
The eternity of blue sea pales to spray.
In such a world we have no need to pray;
The holy voices of the sea and air
Are sacramental, like a mighty prayer
In which the earth has dreamed its tears away.
We row across the waters' fluent gold
And age seems blessèd, for the world is old.
Softly we take from Nature's open palm
The dower of the sunset and the sky,
And dream an Eastern dream, starred by the cry
Of sea-birds homing through the mighty calm.

II

Thou art the dwelling of unshadowed sun
That spills its metal on the furrowed tide
And vivid grasses when the winds have died
In threads of murmur round the noontide spun.
The cerements of flesh are like a rose
Caressed with light, whose petals, one by one
Unfolding, loose the soul to die upon
The ocean of the air that ebbs and flows.
Perchance the truth is nearer than we deem,
That after grievous pilgrimage and dearth
The soul shall wake and find it close beside;
And see, as visioned in a perfect dream,
The pitiful grave spirit of the earth,
A patient presence sitting at God's side.

III

I KNOW it never shall come again,
This present peace of the great grave sea
And the land that laughs in its sheen of rain,
This friendship of nature to you and me,
While Autumn smiles on us, big and sane.

It never shall come though our love abide,
And this very whisper stirs the grass,
While clear and far on the tortured tide
As now, the sea-birds cry and pass
In years that shall come when our day has died.

It never shall come — must we praise or blame
If every day moulds the world anew?
Better perhaps, but never the same;
If this that we cherish and hold for true
Shall wither and fade to an empty name?

'T is the woe o' the world! As the moments fly
I war with time in a great despair,
While the first shy star in the purple sky
Steals through the dead day's golden hair
That I love so much though it comes to die.

IV

WIND OF TWILIGHT

"Cuando besa á la pradera
La brisa que entre las ramas
Pasa con voz lastimera."
— M. Garcia Merou.

Gone the red reaches of repining sea,
Thou, thro' forgotten twilights, and thy pain,
Wind of immortal longing, fresh as rain,
Wonderful, fresh and faint, O mystery!
Give me again the languorous touch of thee
Lost in the purple shadows, while the main,
Intervalled, lifts its choral, and again
Sorrow divine and calm thro' thee to me.
Give me the steady silence: sea, sky, shore,
Earth and her simple idylls! — All is gone!
All shall return, but be the same no more.
Give me, O wonder! still thy dim dark kiss,
Cool on my temples, while I bide alone
And cling to youth and linger pale for this.

PASTORAL

Slopes of the sun and vine, and thou dark stream,
Thou minstrel of the forest-gloom, whose roll
Is like the passing of a natural dream
Through depths of patient sleep
To lend endurance to the taxèd soul.
The cruel life beneath the cruel noon,
Where men are quenched like dewdrops in the sun,
Where haggard women reach to God and weep,
Never corrodes thy silent solitude;
But where thy sheer, green shadows shoreward creep
Through the slow afternoon,
The battle lost, the poem half-begun,
Are chaplets that the hymning dawn-stars keep
To grace the splendid hope our youth imbued.
The twilight flowers close
And down the shadow falls a timid star;
Afar
The sigh and silence of a changing wind,
The perfume of a dying rose —
Beyond the senses and beyond the mind
Dimly we hear a graver music grow, —
Peace! Peace! the world is tuneful of her woes:
With man's despair the richer chord impearled

Is infinite of grief; we in the world
  Hear scattered discord, nor the broad full flow
Of song until, waxed greater than the whole,
  Wide, from their slumber's mystery, unclose
The vision-laden eyelids of the soul.

FALL

Nay, be content — our door that opens wide
On whitened fields this autumn dawn, all furred
With silver imagery, the sudden bird
That soothes the crystal air, the windless tide
Of light across the world from roof to floor —
Thy heart can ask no more.
The fringed horizon of the pines
Is delicate with frore,
And holds our world within its shadow shore,
Our world where beauty fresh with dewy wines
Sits naked at our door.
Thine eyes in mine! The vineyard's dusky bloom,
The garnered grain, are gifts of autumn's mirth;
And now, while softly through the forest gloom
The warm awakening of the good wet earth
Suspires through the dawn, we need not fear
The ceaseless pageantry of death and birth,
The swallow's passing with the changing year.
Our souls could say, "Perfection was and is;
Death comes like slumber," — if to-morrow's sun
Should find us fallen with the summer's rose.
This moment stolen from the centuries,
This foretaste of the soul's oblivion
We hold and cherish, and because of this

FALL

Are life and death made perfect, and thy woes
Turn lyric through the glory we have won.
The morning flower that drew its petals close
And slept the cold night through is now unfurled
To catch the breathless moment; big and sane
Our autumn day forsakes the gates of rose,
And like a lion shakes its golden mane
And leaps upon the world.

SONNETS

I

TO SILENCE

Lord of the deserts 'twixt a million spheres,
Child of the moon-dawn and the naked moon,
Close comrade of the whispered afternoon,
Angel of mercy, whose absolving tears
Erase the discord of our human fears:
Thy lap is freighted with the dawn, thy heart
Is warm about the sunset, for thou art
The woof and fabric of eternal years.
Thy hand is soft upon the troubled eyes,
And, in the palace of thy sister Sleep,
Thy peace remains when Life's last echo dies.
Thou art more tender than the raptured breath
That rounds a virgin's breast, and thou dost keep
Thy kiss to lay upon the brows of Death.

II

TO THE EARTH

The heart can understand, oh, Mother Earth!
Thy tides and winds and seasons whisper, "Fate
Has held us dumb through centuries of hate,
And tears, and blood for things of little worth."
The heart can understand, since Lilith's mirth
Shivered the early echoes, half in scorn,
The world-wide leap of light from every dawn,
Day's dying pomp around thy blood-drenched girth.
Across thy theatre pageants come and pass:
The power and pride of man, a scenic thing,
Frames forth his glory in enduring brass;
And through his dust I hear the whispering
Of lifted waters, and a blade of grass
Breaking the murmur-laden breast of Spring.

III

ESSEX

I

Thy hills are kneeling in the tardy spring,
And wait, in supplication's gentleness,
The certain resurrection that shall bring
A robe of verdure for their nakedness.
Thy perfumed valleys where the twilights dwell,
Thy fields within the sunlight's living coil,
Now promise, while the veins of nature swell,
Eternal recompense to human toil.
And when the sunset's final shades depart
The aspiration to completed birth
Is sweet and silent; as the soft tears start,
We know how wanton and how little worth
Are all the passions of our bleeding heart
That vex the awful patience of the earth.

IV

ESSEX

II

Thine are the large winds and the splendid sun
  Glutting the spread of heaven to the floor
  Of waters rhythmic from far shore to shore,
  And thine the stars, revealing one by one.
Thine the grave, lucent night's oblivion,
  The tawny moon that waits below the skies, —
  Strange as the dawn that smote their blistered eyes
  Who watched from Calvary when the Deed was done.
And thine the good brown earth that bares its breast
  To thy benign October, thine the trees
  Lusty with fruitage in the late year's rest;
And thine the men whose blood has glorified
  Thy name with Liberty's divine decrees —
  The men who loved thy soil and fought and died.

V

Toward thine Eastern window when the morn
Steals through the silver mesh of silent stars,
I come unlaurelled from the strenuous wars
Where men have fought and wept and died forlorn.
But here, across these early fields of corn,
The living silence dwelleth, and the gray
Sweet earth-mist, while afar the lisp of spray
Breathes from the ocean like a Triton's horn.
Open thy lattice, for the gage is won
For which this earth has journeyed through the dust
Of shattered systems, cold about the sun;
And proved by sin, by mighty lives impearled,
A voice cries through the sunrise: "Time is just!"—
And falls like dew God's pity on the world.

VI

FOG AT SEA

Gray grisly tides that choke the master sun
  Who domes the caves of sullen fog with pearl,
  While round and still the sick white eddies swirl
  Between the smothered vistas one by one;
Like ghosts the frail hysteric breezes run
  Aslant the ashen world, and strive to furl
  The slow drenched air in one enormous whirl
  And free the ocean's breast it weighs upon.
The world is dying for a draught of air,
  Great autumn air that like a hoarded stream
  Floods the gigantic openness of dawn;
And, like the whispering of hopeless prayer,
  The white world's voices, as if drowsed with dream,
  Sigh through the muffled stillness and are gone.

VII

NIRVANA

I

And shall we find thee? Shall the tired soul
Toiling in gross dull clay, doomed to abide
In blurred oblivion, condemned to hide
Its eager wings impatient of control,
And God-lit eyes that yearn to view the whole
Of that divinest splendour glorified
In earth's rare visions — shall it feel the tide
Of thy calm love in endless pity roll?
Oh, let the inward vision drink the light
Of thine effulgent countenance! Then might
This immaterial dream of Thee and Me
Dissolve away like moon-mists in the morn,
And we could lapse in silence from the scorn
Of Destiny to thy great unity.

VIII

NIRVANA

II

Woof of the scenic sense, large monotone
  Where life's diverse inceptions, death and birth,
  Where all the gaudy overflow of earth,
  Merge — they the manifold and thou the One.
Increate, complete — when the stars are gone
  In cinders down the void, when yesterday
  No longer spurs desire starvation-gray,
  When God grows mortal in men's hearts of stone, —
As each pulsation of the Heart Divine
  Peoples the chaos, or with falling breath
  Beggars creation, still the soul is thine!
And still untortured by the world's increase,
  Thy wide, harmonic silences of death;
  And last — thy white uncovered breast of peace.

IX

PASSING DAYS

They walk across my life with great, grave eyes
That greet my questioning hands with silent scorn
And blossoms break upon their crowns of thorn,
While garlands wither that their children prize.
I kiss their lips and grow a little wise,
A little patient, while my strength is worn
Beneath the spur of each succeeding morn
That dowers its evening with a fresh surmise.
Their message dies with them, an empty word;
But memory garners, in a wild regret,
Their silent beauty that the heart preferred.
And in the fire of hopeless love they seem
So real with sorrow, that I half forget
My soul shall wake and find the days a dream.

X

ON AN ÆOLIAN HARP

Lure of the night's dædalian sea-born breath,
Wild as the heart's uncomprehended dole,
Strange as the grieving of a mighty soul
Touched with the lyric woe of life and death.
Phraser of world-wide monotones that toll
Like far enormous bells from sky to sky,
Voice of the vaster solitudes that lie
With life's solution past the mind's control.
The golden eyes of long-forgotten days,
The dolorous memory of simple things,
Sadden thy lapsing chords: — the present pays
The past's arrears of sorrow, and they seem
To wake a sense, among thy weeping strings,
Of other lives, like some unceasing dream.

XI

THE SPHINX

Oblivion like perfume from the wings
Of dim Osiris, and the calm of one
High soul, who thy remorseless lips of stone
Chiselled to mock the resonance of kings.
Thy proper silence, ripe with legend, clings
To thine inert omnipotence, endures
Though Gods and empires agonize, and lures
Strange lapses from life's echoing, brazen strings.
Thou seest new stars swing downward through the gloom,
While on her dust, who smiled and ravished Rome,
Decays the graven marble of her tomb.
The fruitful Nile, the desert in thine eyes —
Dead laughter, and dead tears — How much to come? —
Death, death, and fragile life that weeps and dies.

XII

Whiles were, I almost seemed to understand;
I watched the flooding waters with their fleece
Of sudden foam, and felt the ripening peace
And joy of increase that the earth had planned.
Then the great shadow fell across the land,
And in the harsh monotony of wind
I felt the past like Death about my mind,
And mild with grief put forth mine idle hand.
There was the question: each day should I be
What yesterday I was not, and for me
Of my dead self but memory remain?
And when upon my nakedness the snow
Had spread its silence, should I wake and know,
Or sleeping, dream another life as vain?

XIII

TO THE MEMORY OF W. H. P.

Life may not perish though the winds of death
Whine shrilly through the world, where we alone
Crouch in the trodden dust, and feel the moan
Of ancient sorrow burthening our breath.
The blade endureth, though it break the sheath;
Life springs and ceases in oblivion,
Gathered and scattered by the master sun
Like rain upon the waters calm beneath.
We wait like corpses in a charnel-house,
And singly, as the shrouded years return,
They loose the cere-cloth on our furrowed brows;
And one departs in splendour through the tomb,
We hear the voice of Cherubim, and turn
Weeping like children in the intenser gloom.

XIV

INSOMNIA

To wake upon the shrouded, budding sky
And sudden silence — wake and lie alone
In the gigantic solitude, and groan
To feel the sting of light upon the eye.
To wake and wait until the senses cry —
Knowing the sun shall smite upon the sea,
And rouse the tragic day that is to be,
Grief-haunted by the days that have gone by.
To wake, and wait, and lie alone, and know
That through the mist of grim familiar pain
The world is perfect music even now;
To strive and catch the master-hand that pearled
The night with song, and feel, across the rain,
A sadness as the sadness of the world.

XV

I stood upon the old Earth's breast and gazed
To where the seaward sand was gray with brine,
And heard a song-bird weeping in a pine,
Beneath the iron heaven, bent and crazed.
The sea was like an eye that death had glazed;
Amid gray light blown round the ragged marge
The fallen sun hung lustreless and large
And one thin trace of lifeless waters blazed.
I strove to feel God's pity for His men,
As, in the Galilean dawn, the love
Of Jesu widened on the human ken: —
In vain! I watched my fated evening go
Heart-broken beyond tears and round me move
The strength and sorrow of the life I know.

XVI

Our lips are laughing while our eyes are wet;
The happiness we hope, the grief we fear,
The stress and anguish that our moments bear,
Are trivial shadows that our lives forget.
The day's despairing toil and passion's fret
Evanish utterly like empty words;
What was has never been; the past affords
Only a heritage of divine regret.
But whiles the sorrow of a sleeping face
Awakes a deeper pity not our own,
Or when the soul in Beauty's large embrace
Forsakes its margined slumber, we may grow
To greater moments, when we stand alone
And feel that life is sadder than we know.

XVII

THE GATE OF DREAMS

THE Gate of Dreams, where, time and time again,
Through sleep transfigured with a nameless light,
Fearful, upon the tired end of night,
I come as might a devote to his fane.
The Gate of Dreams, of melancholy pain,
Flooding the drowsy labyrinthine soul
With faces of despair or patient dole —
The tragic children of a weary brain.
The Gate of Dreams, where throbs a ghostly wail,
As it were of sobbing strings and wild accords,
Where life is scenic in the smile of fate;
Where faces, shrouded in an iron veil,
Pass outward in a woe too great for words,
Or weep in haggard terror, weep and wait.

XVIII

TO GIACOMO LEOPARDI

Despair is musical, the wings of pain
Are stirred in rhythm of large winds that bear
A mute divinity of human prayer
And human sorrow that the prayer is vain.
The tears of speech that wet thy lips profane
No Muse with discord, for the world's control
Had never blurred the windows of thy soul
Nor bound the beating of thy heart with chain.
But we have piled the gates of sun with dust,
And in the jangling darkness of the earth,
With muffled hearts, exist because we must.
Our times are blasphemous: no tears, no shame,
But heaven insulted with an evil mirth
And greed exalted with a sacred name.

XIX

TO J. T. S.

After reading "Amis et Amile."

And were they friends as thou and I are friends
That take the wind of sorrow open-eyed,
And, striving sunward though the storms divide,
Stand, speak and break amid the press that bends?
We ache to life and bear the dower it sends
Of Godless temples and of rusted sword,
With ashes of the heart the heavens scored,
Arched o'er a world unholy in its ends.
Was their love more than ours, being impearled
With sacrifice of blood and wife and child?
Ah! they, who walked the sunshine of the world
And heard grave angels speaking through a dream,
Had never their unlaurelled brows defiled,
Nor strove to stem the world's enormous stream.

XX

TO THE CHILDREN OF THE MUSE

"Nel secol tetro e in questo aer nefando."
— L.

None shall put forth a hand and twist the brass
That galls the neck of Liberty, none dare
Avert the iron stigma of despair
And show our eyes how good the battle was.
Yet now for you who, 'mid the blowing grass
That hides the grave of honour, sit and stare
In the great muteness of forgotten prayer —
The vengeance of the Lord has come to pass!
They fester in their cities who have scarred
The face of earth until her skeleton
Is naked, and her breasts are dry and hard;
Say, shall ye tear the world's dishevelled robe
And lay her ulcers open to the sun,
Or murmur soft, "Thy will be done!" like Job?

XXI

L'ENFANT DU SIÈCLE

Dim dying child be still and taste thy pain,
Poor hands be mild, for no new God appears,
And patient on thy pinnacle of years,
Dark soul forego thy Godlike task and chain
Thy longings; Faith has died and they are vain,
And thou hast lost the power of natural tears,
And memories that thy dateless childhood bears
Have blurred thy living days like sterile rain.
The soul's sweet choristers that once did toll
Thro' God's immensity are fallen dumb;
As when the accorded harps and martial drum,
Thro' some vast palace where a kingly soul
Has passed away, are hushed; and thou shalt come
Thro' life a mourner, mute and pitiful.

XXII

AUX MODERNES

"Dispera
L'ultima volta."

— LEOPARDI.

I

ONLY an empty platitude for God,
Only for poetry a jangling nerve,
Only for life the baser lusts to serve,
Only a fashion where the function stood.
Only a shadow stealing span on span
Over the unmeasured whiteness of the soul;
Darkness around the God-established goal
That blazed before the innocence of man.
And when the flame of adolescence breaks
On some wild heart the world has overthrown,
He stares as one who waits alone and wakes,
Cheated of love and faith, his vision drawn
Haggard and hopeless from his death-bed down
The hard, gray, tacit distances of dawn.

XXIII

AUX MODERNES

II

When I have learned the accents of your speech,
The splendid grief of silence; when I know
Your acrid laughter and your tearless woe,
And learn the shame of life — what you can teach;
When dust returns to dust, and mutely each
Grows haggard thro' the fard — then I shall say,
"Your foolish lips have lied from day to day,
And life has reached the goal that life must reach."
And then a hush — and then a mighty thought
Shall move upon the fabric of your lives
As thro' a tavern window looms the dawn;
And in your tarnished tinsel, in the scorn
Of guttered candles, all your lives have sought
And you shall fade and finish — Truth survives!

XXIV

Of this that I have written none is mine,
Save only as my clouded sense has heard
And blurred with ineffectual rhyme the Word
Whose Virgin silence was and is divine.
The veins of God are filled with golden wine
Perturbed with splendour, and this world we dream
Around our tinsel lives endows a theme
Of music — Hearken! for its voice is thine!
The Youth and Beauty of the earlier earth
Have never died, but on the breast of song
They lie like flowers — 't is we that agonize!
And in the gray senescence of our birth
Erase the soul whose voice condemns the wrong,
And move our fingers through the dust we prize.

XXV

TO A STATUE

Deep Soul that may not hold the brazen mould,
Spirit whose silence bideth to the moon,
Thou Goddess of the closing afternoon,
Who gazeth where the tidal air is cold —
Thine eyes have watched beyond the stars grown gold,
That polar silence where the shrouded spheres
Stir slightly through the mist of little years,
For thou wert never born, nor young, nor old.
Goddess without a shrine to bear the prayer
Of thy few faithful, whose despair has won
A mourning fillet for thy solemn hair:
The soul shall hear thee sigh beyond the cry
Of Time, and fallen headlong from the sun,
Shall find thy pity in the vaster sky.

XXVI

A DREAM

I DREAMED the world of noon was stricken blind:
A sun, so haggard that it starved the air,
Scarcely sufficed to light the stark despair
Of tearless millions shrieking to the wind.
Then, leering on the world, a hellish mind
Drawn in a hearse, raved silently of pain;
The voices died and silence laid the strain
Of unforgotten anguish on mankind.
Upon their bones the flesh of men grew gray,
All nature withered in a wild regret,
And maddened whispers scared the ashy sun:
"No more," they moaned, "men's hearts, like drops of spray,
Shall touch their ocean, mingle and forget —
This is the burial of oblivion!"

XXVII

"ELI! ELI! LAMA SABACTHANI!"

The glare of Hell it was, the haggard light,
And tragic to His ears, from Galilee,
Like wailing children sobbed His native sea:
Then on the cruel nails He strained upright
With sinews drawn as steel, and cast His sight
Over the blackness, but He might not see —
Even He the Christ. He plucked against the tree
With piteous hands, and called across the night
Thrice upon God the Father — none replied!
The Heavens were void; ecstatic voices cried,
"Despair! Despair! in death ye may not die!"
He heard: the great sweat beaded on His face,
The vital sob urged outward, and a space
Rose through dissolving faith the Eternal Lie!

XXVIII

DANTE

Thy voice — all its least tones, the strain and stir
Measured and ardent, and the mighty trend
Outward upon a light-pervaded end,
Gained through the fields of flame and hideous blur.
Thou art sonorous as the shuddering fir
Thwarting the tempest, nor thy metres bend
Under their splendid freight, when thou dost blend
Power and light and love to speak of Her.
Inward thy flame arose and strong with strife
Shone in thy words — thou art to me as life,
Beaten, renewed with hope, and undestroyed.
Thy voice comes pure to me as waters falling,
Swells till it seems I hear the Seraph calling
Through open spaces of the dayless void.

XXIX

LOVE

I

Sadder and more divine than human tears
Born on the eyes to utter what is dumb,
This simple silence when the heart grows numb
Among the dead desires of perished years.
Such silence quivers with the song it bears,
Unsung within a fabric of old pain,
Till in the dust of tired passions, plain
Through wreaths of light, the naked truth appears.
Then poised upon the moment thou canst lay
Thy brow upon the Heart of Hearts, and feel
The tide that ebbs and waxes through us all;
Till from the silence, through the world's decay,
A voice shall speak to thee like beaten steel,
Lest on thy sea of sun the shadows fall.

XXX

LOVE

II

It flows thro' all of time from heart to heart,
This solemn wonder fresh with naked strength,
This source of life where every mouth at length
Must drink and feel the old impulsions start.
It is the whole that moves through every part,
The aspiration dim of things unborn,
The prophecy of life's essential dawn,
That tears the everlasting night apart.
And we who are, and were the splendid spur
For wasted generations, we must bear
For human sake the same gigantic stir
Of breathless longing, and the great command
Of life to life, and leave our spirits bare
To feel the truth they cannot understand.

XXXI

I DREAMED of Thee, O Wonder, with the sheen
Amid thy temples of a sanguine gem,
And warm, between thy garment's purple hem,
The languid passions of that Persian Queen
Who sate with she-slaves in her quiet gloom,
And felt the sob of fountains and the keen
Perfume of lotus, and the murmurous lean
Of windy flowers, and life's impending doom.
O dream of dazzled senses and the pain
Of conscious happiness! I woke beneath
The dark maturing dawn, while earth again
Renewed its patient toil for human sake,
And felt the tender calm of such a death
As thine, O Wonder, dream whose death it was to wake.

XXXII

She came once only in a dream of death
And touched my face with wise, unhurried hand,
And, "Man," her silence said, "I understand —
The end is now, and quiet now, and faith."
And lotos-like and moved with tender breath,
Her breast was calm as night and pale and bare,
And, watching thro' the gloom of burnished hair,
Her solemn eyes were deep, and tears beneath.
And tears were on the lips that kissed her mouth,
And only tears could speak to her, and tears
Fell burning on her breast — the tears of youth.
And life, and evermore its weariness
Was dim forgotten pain, the iterate years
Were ceased, the roar of time was echoless.

XXXIII

The low moon quivers on the hyacinth sky,
And lays upon the ocean's glooming frown
Its frail caress; like silence tenderly
The shadow falls immeasurably down.
A smouldering flame perturbs the heaven's girth,
As might, in some great moment, silently,
A sudden vision of the tragic earth
Blazon the brows of God with mystery.
And thou shalt come as the great shadow falls,
Like the slow single star, and lay thy last
Ethereal kiss upon my tired eyes;
And I shall answer thee as one who calls
Through the dumb places of the haunted past,
Drinking its fulness ere the moment dies.

XXXIV

Tell me again, and then lift up to me
Those frail white arms of thine and touch my face,
And wrap me wholly in thine eyes' embrace,
Till God's sure hand run fire round me and thee.
Tell me again, and let thy speaking be
A faint phrased echo, delicate as lace,
Of seas sonorous through the void of space,
The low, lost rhythm of immensity.
Tell me again, and where thy breasts divide
Pillow my weariness — the breath of fall
Shall blow crisp, crimson leaves upon thy hair;
Thy presence is as where a song has died,
And left its memory grieving over all
This vital solitude of autumn air.

XXXV

Give me thy pitiful, soft-moulded hand,
And we will bide in silence, Thou and I;
Within the choirèd poem of the sky
Thine is the voice I cannot understand.
Give me thy hand and let the heart command:
My mind is blurred, and yet I seem to know
Darkly what men have spoken of, and now
The Word itself their lips have never spanned,
Nor I shall ever speak it, nor shall they
That illustrate to-morrow with their birth;
The tongue is tethered — we can just obey;
And from the gates of sunrise issue dumb,
Illumined — while the spirit of the earth
Reveals her secret, knowing we have come.

XXXVI

If I have touched thy heart, as Solomon,
When seemed the world dissolving in a kiss,
Upon the pages wonder-white with prayer
With lyric fingers laid his rose of song;
And if the most I am is just — a man,
Why yet, Belovèd, in that I am thine,
I must not ask forgiveness; this I write
Is all and more than I can say I am;
Like veilèd music through the threadbare words
Thy heart is beating even now, for I
Have seen the morning quicken through its sleep
In cycles of dim song. Thou canst not say
What I have given is deserving scorn,
For I have naught to give that is not Thine.

XXXVII

TOO SOON

His wordless voice was like a toiling dream;
I waited, stupid in my wasted hope,
And felt the winds, beneath the heavens cope,
Stir like the pulse of some vast gradual stream.
This was the end. I heard again his scream
Of perfect fear, and felt about me furled
The naked hate of all the living world: —
God's eyes looked into mine nor were supreme!
The crawling fear had thrust his jaws apart
And fixed his lidless eyes against the wall,
And Death held back the tides within his heart;
I cried, "For Pity, tell me if she lied!"
Then came the hideous simper, and a small
Mute whisper writhed upon his lips and died.

XXXVIII

TOO LATE

While over all the sullen embers gloat,
Silence, forgetfulness and only now
The twilight of your hair across my brow,
And soft my kiss upon your marble throat.
Be still — great visions through the quiet float,
And while the wind is wailing at our door,
And day retires in gloom across the moor,
Time shall forget an hour and grow remote
And — Hush! The fire is dull between your hair:
My tear upon your breast your curtained eyes
Have answered — it is all the heart can bear!
Peace! Peace! there's pity in the soul of pain,
And now our lives fulfil their destinies —
Hark! the despairing whisper of the rain.

XXXIX

THE NIGHT-WIND

Echoless voice of few sufficing chords,
  Soft as the memory of a vaster rest,
  Secret as sorrow held within the breast
  Of one whose silence never stoops to words.
Harp of waste waters by thy hands caressed,
  Chalice of music — prayer and song and strife —
  Filled with that wine that drowns the ills of life
  When the last vineyards of the soul are pressed.
Prophet of final calm where life shall cease,
  Cease and a kind forgetfulness of soul
  Fall like a balm upon the wounds of peace —
Thy voice shall soothe the last and sternest fight,
  Threading the dark dim solitudes of night,
  Like life without a prelude or a goal.

XL

And they shall say to thee, "He died distraught;
His mind was crazed by dreaming on things past,
And so he grew in madness till the last
Sheer height of scorn he tottered from to naught.
His hands were weak and idle and ne'er caught
With strength of purpose at the busy world;
Forlorn and proud he stood — Time onward whirled
And left the ruins of the things he sought."
But thou shalt understand what they despise,
Cherish what they reject, and count the few
Poor virtues dearer than the things they prize.
And weighing all the evil they have said,
Thy heart shall say, "What, then, if this be true?
Be Silent! for he loved me and is dead."

A LAST WORD

THINE be the last thought and the best, and thine
These few, poor, fluttering words, and thine the whole
Of life, that in the quiet of the soul,
Stirs through the muteness of the Heart Divine.

And in its silence, overwrought with song,
Where, through the curtained chambers of the mind,
The soul of thought, in solitude enshrined,
Unutterable dwells, and pure and strong,

Thy royal heart shall cross the wide-eyed dawn
Alone, and find the unspoken thing I am
Waiting for none but thee behind the sham
Of rhymèd words where the poem's self is born.

POEMS

(1899–1902)

TO W. W.

I toss upon Thy grave,
(After Thy life resumed, after the pause, the backward
glance of Death;
Hence, hence the vistas on, the march continued,
In larger spheres, new lives in paths untrodden,
On! till the circle rounded, ever the journey on!)
Upon Thy grave, — the vital sod how thrilled as from
Thy limbs and breast transpired,
Rises the spring's sweet utterance of flowers, —
I toss this sheaf of song, these scattered leaves of love!
For thee, Thy Soul and Body spent for me,
— And now still living, now in love, transmitting still
Thy Soul, Thy Flesh to me, to all! —
These variant phrases of the long-immortal chant
I toss upon Thy grave!

OUTWARD

Outward broad airs, the sea's unshadowed sweep,
And larger voice on shores of lovelier lands,
Starred heavens of vaster light and night with sleep
Tender as women's hands.

Outward the grave processional of hours,
Each a discovered joy, a solved surmise,
Days dark in bud that ripening, fall like flowers
Gardened in Paradise.

Outward! O throes resolved in mightier song!
Splendour of nameless deeds, essential words,
Merged in the large acceptance, in the long
Pulse of the cosmic chords.

Outward, where every word and deed is fit;
Outward, beyond the lies of name and shame,
Of sin and ignorance the cause of it,
Life's prison of fancied flame.

Outward! O heart, the secret solved at last!
Love that enfolds, unites, and understands;
Love like the sea, with equal waters cast
On this and alien lands!

OUTWARD

Outward! O free at last! O steadfast soul
  Calm in the poise of natural things! O wise,
How wise is love! — only, beyond control,
  To pass with open eyes!

THE VOYAGE

OUTWARD! Sail ever on thy mystic voyages,
Cut loose, up anchor from the shores of thought!
There leave in safety all the dull world's countless captives,
Seek thou the freedom only thou hast sought.

Thine are the prophets, thine the few, the poets, martyrs,
Stung with the impulse of divine surmise;
Thy chosen ventured while the millions feared and faltered,
Realized the rapture, dared the great surprise.

Outward! For, ever as of old, the deep sea's distance,
Ever new skies to lift and lighten, lie
Far down the dusk of day-break from the shores proved pathways
Pathless to perilous eternity.

Yea! tho' the friendly wharves are all aflame with faces,
Yea! tho' their anger rave in foolish sound, —
Outward! — Their hands would hinder but their hearts are fearful;
Leave them their fetters, Thou shalt not be bound!

THE VOYAGE

What tho' they cry — "Time's hosts have trod our ways of life out,
Roads, charts and lamplight, — ours the valued prize,
The proved!" Thou sayest — "My goal how dim, my seas how trackless,
My risks how vast!" Then leave them to their lies!

Shake down the sails to catch the blood-red drift of sunset!
Haste! lest they hold thee slave among the slaves.
Thou shalt be outcast of their laws and scorned and homeless:
The sin the world blames is the sin that saves.

Outward! The sail full-breasted swells against the night-fall,
And now the world where blind men lead the blind,
The world of laws and lies, of safety and obedience,
The prize, the conflict, — all is left behind!

Outward! O haste! The flushed fresh mouth of dawn is calling!
Outward! O space at last! O light at last!
Steer where the comrades wait thee, journeying still, still outward,
Wise in a conscious and perfected past.

A SONG FOR WAKING

Ere the blossom of sun from the mystical bud of the twilight is tenderly, hugely unfurled,
Ere the lion of light from his lair in the womb of the shaken, green sea-shadows leaps on the world,
Ere the masterful mistress and mother of life is released as a child from the womb of the night,
Ere the echoing bell of the heavens resounds with the rush of the resonant pinions of light:

Ere the day is declared and the globes of the dew are filled full of the splendour of opal and pearl,
Ere the foam-lilies dropped from the lap of the storm are as roses that blush at the breast of a girl,
Ere the aisles of the forest are heavy with dusk and are sweet with the murmur and marvel of birds,
Ere the dreams of the slumber of earth are destroyed and she utters her hymn of ineffable words:

Thro' the drift of the derelict airs, thro' the wind-trodden seas that are windless and weary with foam,
On the strength of the shouldering tides and the roar of the refluent surge down the beaches of home,

A SONG FOR WAKING

Comes the dream of the darkness of light, the frail
flush of the feet of the dawn down the ways of
the sea,
Thro' the measureless sound of the marching of tides
where the steeds of the tempest rode fiercely
and free!

Comes the delicate rapture of crimson as mute and
intense as the dream of a passionate deed,
Comes the miracle faultless as fire and fierce as a
heart where desire is sown as a seed,
Comes the glow like a prayer on the lips of a pro-
phet whose eyes are aflame with the vision of
God,
Comes the flush like the solemn delight of the love
that can waken a soul in the brute or the clod.

And the silence is rich with the promise of song as
the face of a child in the stillness of sleep,
And the pause of the perfect fulfillment is grave as
a death on the midnight when summer is deep,
And the joy is the joy of a woman, her love and the
light of her face and the sound of her feet.
And the calm is profound as the calm of a soul risen
freely from life with his knowledge complete.

Over exquisite wind-dappled meadows that cover the
foot and are fresh as a night in the fall,

Where the airs scarce remember the rage of the tempest and darkness is deep round the world like a wall,
Let us forth, ere the skies are washed empty of stars as the wind-rippled floods of the day-spring run free,
Let us forth where the welkin is stately with sound and the headlands are held in the cleave of the sea!

Let us leap from the scattered sweet shadows of slumber and venture our lives on the charger of youth,
While the sunrise is closed as the lips of a girl ere the kiss of a lover has kindled her mouth,
Till the languid, low airs smitten shrill with our passage re-echo the thunder of hoofs as we ride,
Let us press down the perilous ways of the present our steed tho' he bleed 'neath the rowel of pride!

Let us press in the hidden wet ways of the forest filled full of the shadows and sounds of the past,
Let us travel the fields by the River of Years till the ways of the waters are open at last;
And our steed shall be staunch tho' he weary and wince

at the spur, tho' his nostrils are purple with
blood,
For the craving of Soul and the power of Love, for
the freedom of Faith and the friendship of
God!

THE GREEK GALLEY

The sound of the sea, the sway of the song, the swing
of the oar!
Out of the darkness, over the naked seas,
Our galley is come
With a shiver and leap,
As the blade bites deep
To the sway of back and the bend of knees,
As she drives for home
Out of the darkness, over the naked seas,
To the sound of sea and the sway of song and the
sweep of oar!

The scarlet stars swing low to the ocean's floor
Made silver and pearl by the slow resurgent sun,
And the waters break
To a leprous wake,
As over the sea the ripples shake
Between dawn and dark, as for life's sweet sake
The battle of life is fought and won.
And evermore,
To the sound of sea and the sway of song and the
swing of oar,
We sever the sentient silences
With our wind and way, where over the seas
The surf booms steady and strong on the scented shore.

Over the sea's unfurrowed fields
The miracle spreads and the darkness yields.
O heart that breaks in the strain and stress
Of sinews bent to the tempered oak! —
The golden gates of the dawn express
Sudden and soft as a girl's caress,
A glimmer of grass and a flash of wing,
An echo of prayer to the censer's swing,
And the altar's pillar of purple smoke.
And over the spray that the rowers fling,
Wide over the tide where the foam-drifts cling,
As the rhythm of muscle and music swing
To the sound of the sea, the sway of the song, the sweep of the oar,
To the crash and cream of waves on the bountiful shore,
The spring breaks scented over the sea!
With a leap of sunlight under the lee,
As she dips her side
To the masterful tide
And lists till the bilge distills through the cypress floor.

O, the lift of blade! O, the clinging and shifting of naked feet!
The coil of muscle that stiffens and swells to the delicate beat
Of breath in the nostrils, of blood in the brain,
As the earth-smell steals to our sense again

From the pebble-blue beach where the shadows lie
wet and sweet!

We have fought in the noon for breath —
To the sound of sea and the sway of song and the sweep
of oar;
Our bodies would swing at the oars in death,
Nor the rhythm of muscle and music cease,
Nor the weariness end, nor the sad surcease
Of sorrow absolve us: but evermore
Our bodies would swing to the pitiless oar
Till the goal was reached,
Till the galley was beached,
Till we tasted the spring in the forests and
pleached
Gardens and vineyards of Greece on the plentiful
shore!

The flurry of foam flecked red as the dawn looks over
the trees,
And ever the motion of song and the pulse of ineffable seas
That empty and echoless break on the exquisite
balance of air, —
And tenderly winged on the morning, a perfumed and
delicate breeze,
Where the scent of the sacrifice floats with the distant refrain of a prayer,

Where the cry of a bird and the whisper of grass
and the lowing of kine,
Are borne thro' the thunder of waves and the
smell of the brine.

And behold! We are come, we are there, we shall pass
thro' the fringes of foam —
To the sound of the sea and the sway of the song
and the sweep of the oar —
And the galley be lifted and leap like our hearts for
the rest that has come —
A spot of sunlight rolls on the reeking floor!
She shall shiver and strike thro' the sundered spray,
And the clean, fresh sand where the ebb-tides play
Be gored and gashed with her eager keel;
And our feet shall feel
The swash of sea and the crawl of sand
As we leap to land
And pause and kneel
To the sound of prayer,
While thro' the air
The dawn expands till the shadows are passed
And the noon is over the sea at last!

With our women and slaves, with our oxen and vines,
we shall pass from the roar
And the sound of the sea, the sway of the song, the
sweep of the oar —

And stand where the burden of spring on the brows of
the hills
Is heavy and wet — where the blowing of pipes and
the running of rills
Persist in our ears. — In the warmth of the sun and
the wash of the wind,
In the ceasing of struggle and peace of the mind,
With the wandering passed,
We are home at last!

THE WORLD'S TOO LONG ABOUT US

The world's too long about us! — Let us go
Far from the righteous and the ignorant,
The vacant phrases of familiar cant,
The trivial loveless women and the low
Abortive men, the fashions stale and slow,
The greed of riches and the crime of want!

Come! lest contentment dim the quenchless fire,
Come! lest we lose from life the magic spell,
The power of thought, the ceaseless miracle
Of day and night, the youth of love's desire.
Come! lest we wear the livery, take the hire,
And prove in virtuous platitudes 't is well.

Come! lest we take the thralldom and the food,
Accept the hire and kiss the master's hand,
Or hear, obedient to the world's command,
Our praises from the Ciceronian "good";
Or feel the shame of being understood
By those we know can never understand!

Earth knows our bodies, heaven our conscious souls!
The world is ignorant of all but name;
Come! let us fear its praise and seek its blame,

Take larger motives that ignore its goals,
And blow a fire within life's smouldering coals
To scar its social erebus with flame!

Come! — We can feel, dilate with endless air,
The journeying seas, or watch our Paris take
New moods of laughter, or the sun-God shake,
Low down the Nile, the splendour of his hair.
Extreme in joy, extreme in soul's despair,
Come! Let us dare to go for sweet life's sake!

Life's choice is this: the world or all the rest.
The heights are lonely and the depths are dark;
Haply too weak of soul I miss the mark
And fall below the world's unloveliest
Level of littleness — I say the best
Is mine, I venture life's extremest test.
No failures quench the Truth's eternal spark!

LES BOURGEOIS

Be silent! Let them laugh and lie
  Nor speak nor heed but come away;
In truth they neither live nor die,
  More vain than gaudy flies that play
  And perish in the vital day.

By rule and custom, time and place,
  Secure in noise and littleness,
They live and laugh and lust a space,
  Incurious of themselves lest stress
  Of truth annul their nothingness.

Their borrowed praise, their hired blame,
  Their timid platitudes, their greed,
The virtue of their hidden shame,
  The vices of their sordid creed,
  Are theirs to serve a social need.

Their crime then? None! Their lives are food
  To vainer things, and they shall seem,
Afraid of sin, too weak for good,
  Once vanished, like a stupid dream
  That never was — and now my theme! —

Be something, good or bad! Be real!
They are not, — we'll take issue here
Against them! — not for base ideal
Or murdered truth, but for their mere
Respectability, the mood of fear!

A SONG FOR REVOLUTION

Tho' the red-litten cities are shameless and the rulers
are guilty with gold,
Tho' the lips of the prophet are flameless and the
shrines of the sacrifice cold,
Tho' the shadow of freedom departed lies deep in
the paths where She pressed,
Tho', a goddess, She grieves broken-hearted for the
children who starve at her breast,

Tho' the forehead forsaken of bay-leaves is bound
with a circlet of blood
And the sweat that the labour of day leaves brews
the wine of the mercy of God,
Tho' we lose all the loves that besought us, tho' our
children rejoice in their chains,
Still we cling, as our visions have taught us, to the
faith of our raptures and pains!

And tho' Nations forsake the desire and the faith
of immutable things,
Tho' the earth be subdued for their hire who rejoice
in the cities of kings,
Tho' the whole earth be theirs for their pleasure, and
every man master or slave,

Still the sea can afford beyond measure the inheritance
perfect we crave!

We can pass where the sand on the shore is made
smooth as the breast of a girl,
Where the waves whisper marvellous stories and the
tideways are lustrous as pearl,
Where the crest of the breakers in onset subsides in
a welter of blood
As the flame of the sword of the sunset is plunged in
the breast of the flood;

Where the sea-splintered lightning of noon lies in
the lap of the long afternoon,
By the fire of the pharos of moonrise, with the fault-
less, frail feet of the moon,
Over meadows of midnight where starlight lies scat-
tered like dew on a lawn,
Let us forth so we follow the far light of freedom,
the soul's light of dawn!

Let us go with the wind and the twilight behind us,
the rain in our hair,
With a star on the brows of the shy night in ineffable
heights of the air;
The wide waters before us shall whiten, the horizon
that bound us be rent,

And no longer our hearts as they lighten shall grieve
or complain or repent!

We have seen that the progress they praise is of
tears and enslavement and blood,
Tho' they honour with blasphemous phrases their
crimes as the service of God;
In their mines where the serfs they control press in
their factories reeking with coal
They must labour until they are soulless, and the
birthright of man is his soul!

Tho' rejected of men we seem friendless, yet all na-
ture itself is our home,
For we come as the last of an endless procession and
sing as we come!
But they, faithless and cold to the kernel, with their
minds in dogmatic control,
They have lost the divine and eternal strong joys of
the body and soul!

And we bear as our brothers before us the message
eternal and new,
The exultant, unspeakable chorus of the souls that
are tender and true,
And our word for each comrade is, "Thee-ward all
joys in the universe trend,

If thou darest with us to go seaward, on the seas of
the soul without end!

"If thou darest go forth from the phrases that cheat,
from the laws that restrain,
From the shrines where the high-priest who prays
is untrue and the servant of gain,
Then the light and the love shall not perish but en-
dure to illumine the years,
For the fire of rebellion we cherish is Promethean
and ours by our tears."

It is naught if the loveliest spaces of earth bear the
soilure of greed
For a day or an æon effaces the purpose, the profit,
the deed;
It is naught if they bring us disaster, if they blacken
the skies in our ken,
But we weep for the slave and the master, for the
stunted and loveless, the men!

It is naught if a man be defeated, it is naught if he
suffer and die,
It is naught if he starve and is cheated by the greedy
who pillage and lie,
It is much if reduced to a fashion or bound in what-
ever control,

His body is scanted of passion, or he forfeits the light
of his soul!

And we whisper to all men and women, "Lo! the
light is at hand, and the way,
Be it strange, be it guarded with foemen, is broad
as the justice of day;
You shall no more be joyless or lonely, our secret
shall amply suffice,
For man's world is a fashion and only man's body
and soul are of price!"

THE HERITAGE

O, say in the splendour of days that await us, the
scope and desire of midnights to be,
The fruit of what powerful passions shall sate us, what
Truths more effusive shall make us more free?
What new depths of the soul shall we seek and dis-
cover, what strength of the body, what heat
of the heart?
In the dream of the seer, on the lute of the lover, what
secrets shall yield and what melodies start?

Shall the days be more ample and florid before us, the
large nights more pregnant of mystical birth?
What fresh voices shall peal what ineffable chorus,
what beauty revive the old legends of earth?
The old ramparts of thought, shall they fall and be
shattered? The old barriers of Love, shall they
splendidly fade?
Shall the heavy, heaped dust of remembrance be scat-
tered, our pleasures by loftier joys be repaid?

Since the rapture of Life is the longing that rages and
Truth is the wisdom that kindles to flame,
So the judgments of God and the laws of the sages,
man's virtue and evil, his praise and his blame,

Shall be fused in the Truth of what new revelation, dissolved in the floods of what limitless light?
As we forfeit our hearts to what new expectation, what senses shall thrill to what nameless delight?

In what wise shall the lips of our new loves grow fervent, what dreamed-of caresses lie warm in their hands?
Than the Gods who made Sapho their priestess and servant, what lovelier Gods shall inflict their commands?
When the altars of Love are heaped up over-measure, when the passion of love grows intense as despair,
What embrace shall afford what unbearable pleasure, on what breast, in the perfume and dusk of what hair?

And the elder grave Gods we have chosen and cherish, bright Gods of our youth that were sumptuous and young! —
Must they fail in the light of new vistas and perish as fail in long twilights the pulse of a song?
Shall perfections so distant they seemed a derision, the wild aspirations we dared not avow,
Be revealed in a solvent new vastness of vision, attained in a mightier moment than now?

Then what holier shrines shall receive our oblation,
what visions reveal more ineffable skies?
As we pass from the creeds of our old adoration what
marvels shall wake a more pregnant surmise?
What new virtues and sins shall complete and delight
us, what tenderness thrill in our hearts like a
song?
In what paths where what marvellous day-spring shall
light us, what chorus of Heroes shall hail us
along?

All the questions are vain yet the day never faileth to
light the large dusk of the limitless past,
And desire forever in all ways availeth to bring all
the largess we long for at last;
A new ecstasy wakes to a novel desire, to a vision more
wise new horizons shall swell,
Tho' we will to ring round the huge heavens with fire
or satiate such passions they know not in hell!

Tho' we will to be God all-receptive in heaven, yet
our longing To Be is forever too small;
We are more than we know, as we ask shall be given,
to ourselves and to only ourselves we are thrall;
With the sword of our will we may rend as a curtain
the dusk of desires that wince and withhold,
Whatsoever we ask for the guerdon is certain, be it
dust or the dawn-star, God's heaven or gold!

THE PASSAGE

Onward ever and outward ever, over the uttermost
verge of the earth,
With ever before us the perilous vista, behind us the
laughter and light of the hearth;
With the wind of the wilderness fresh in our faces, the
rain in our hair like a chaplet of light,
As the silent, low shine of the dawn, like a dew-fall, is
sifted and shed thro' the raiment of night.
And the airs shall be smitten in sunder
Before us
With lightning and voices of thunder
In chorus.

We shall pass over desolate places, strange forest and
measureless plain,
And the noon shall relent and the spaces of midnight
be severed in twain;
Over meadows that murmur with fountains, where
rivers like serpents lie curled,
We shall pass to the wall of the mountains, crouched
low on the edge of the world:
Till the last low ledge of the lea
Makes division,
Till the wild, wide waste of the sea

Fills our vision,
We must journey in morning and midnight, we must travel in sorrow and mirth,
Onward ever and outward ever, over the uttermost verge of the earth!

Onward ever and outward ever, over the uttermost verge of the sea,
Out over the tremulous tides and the trackless waste ways to the wall of the firmament free,
Fulfilled of the light of ineffable spaces, the echoless thunder of wind in the night,
And broad in the burnished blue hollow of heaven the endless procession of darkness and light.
For the fire of the full moon shall waken
To find us,
And the hounds of the storm be forsaken
Behind us;
We shall on thro' the vistas uncertain, having neither beginning nor end,
Tho' as folds of a fluttering curtain the deep sea be shaken and rend,
Tho' the sea, where the foam-rivers run white, be naked and weary and blind
As the breast of a shield in the sunlight, or black with the scourges of wind:
Till the great green wall of the wave
Shall cover us,

Or the sweet spring grass of the grave
Blow over us,
We must on till we fall in our traces, we must follow
the dawn and be free,
Onward ever and outward ever, over the uttermost
verge of the sea!

Onward ever and outward ever, over the uttermost
verge of the Soul,
Out over the ages resumed in remembrance, the
priest's and the tyrant's relentless control,
The puny divisions of evil and virtue, restrictions of
men and commandments of God, —
O, ever the Soul in all paths and all places where stray-
ing or striving the Children have trod!
For the Great Gods who curse and defile us
Shall fear us,
And all men who hate and revile us
Shall hear us;
And the bonds of allegiance that fetter the spirit,
the oaths of obedience sworn in the past,
Shall be words of the lesson of life we inherit, em-
braced, understood, superseded at last.
We are done with the Gods of our old adoration, we
acknowledge they served in their turn and
were fair,
But we go, for behold! after long preparation what no
man has dared to discover we dare!

Till the Body and Soul and all time
Shall be blended,
Aspiration and virtue and crime
Comprehended,
We must fathom the sense and the spirit till we stand
self-possessed of the whole,
Onward ever and outward ever, over the uttermost
verge of the Soul!

DAY AND DARK

Now the golden fields of sunset rose on rose to me-
ward fall,
Down the dark reverberate beaches clear and far the
sea-birds call,
Blue across the fire-stained waters, eastward thrusts
the chuckling tide,
Fresh as when the immortal impulse took the lifeless
world for bride.

Now the shore's thin verge of shallows keep the tense
and tender light,
Now the stars hang few and faultless, diademed on the
brows of night,
Now the moon's unstinted silver falls like dew along
the sea
While from far a friendly casement softly fills with
light for me.

So it ends! I reaped the harvest, lived the long and
lavish day,
Saw the earliest sunlight shiver thro' the breakers'
endless play,
Felt the noonday's warm abundance, shared the hours
of large repose,

While the stately sun descended thro' the twilight's
sumptuous close.

Now the night-fall — Ah! I guess the immortal
secret, glimpse the goal,
Know the hours have scanted nothing, know each
fragment hints the whole,
While the Soul in power and freedom dares and wills
to claim its own,
Star over star, a larger, lovelier unknown heaven be-
yond the known!

RETROSPECT

Beyond the earth is sea,
  Beyond the sense is soul,
Beyond this life a little sleep,
  Beyond the race the goal.

I know the earth is young,
  And time a little thing;
When first the stars harmonious sung
  Thro' heaven, I heard them sing.

Full well I know that I
  Was there when chaos hurled
Formless and fervent on the void
  The huge and pregnant world.

Sheer down the endless skies
  We took our furious flight,
Our wings of flame flapped, vast and dumb,
  Against the ageless night.

Helmless and wild we crossed
  The eternal seas of space,
And moored beside the sun and swung
  In our predestined place.

Pure as a distant song,
  Echoed from south to north,
The strange first dawn came grave and strong,
  Gigantically forth.

The sheer black pinnacle
  Of sky grew vaguely blue,
As down the cold, thin, empty airs
  The red light glistered thro'.

And when the last stars died
  About the noonday sun,
And on the enormous distance fell
  Daylight's oblivion,

I saw green tendrils blur
  The acrid plains, the sea
Suck down between the naked hills,
  Roaring immeasurably.

Then day retired, night fell,
  Frail breezes shook the air;
The moon showed large between the stars
  Her void unfaltering stare.

Thro' all the perfect night
  Ringing with silver, I
Stood in my human solitude,
  Wondering ineffably.

Then, in response, I heard
A voice within me sing:
"I know the stars are very young,
And Time a little thing!

"Always Truth waits beyond
Larger and more divine:
The immeasurable Past
And light and life are mine.

"Father, O Soul of Me!
Thy scope is never whole;
Always a new infinity
Lies waiting for the Soul!"

Beyond the earth is sea,
Beyond the sense is soul,
Beyond this life, a little sleep,
Beyond the parts the whole!

SONNETS

I

Cut loose! Hoist sail! Leave the familiar shores
Of life! Drive out on love's enormous wind
Far from the safe small pieties and blind
Tangles of conscience! O set wide the doors
And throw the strong arms open utterly!
Go forth reckless with faith and unresigned,
Thus only seeking shall you surely find
The peril and rapture of true liberty!
Thus only shall divine discoveries
Stretch the vague margins of the conscious soul
And fire the peaks of more inclusive skies;
Thus may we burst the self-created bond
Of sordid fears and hear life's surges roll
On shores of truth that always lie beyond!

II

Would I were hopeful as the tender leaves,
Would I were faithful as the myriad grass,
Kindling conviction in the ways I pass;
Would I believed as every flower believes!
The pale wheat springs and flowers, the golden sheaves
Serve in their turn — the Earth's religion brings
Proof of the power and miracle of things,
That none are infidel and no thing grieves.
No thing in nature grieves and all things die;
Yea! from their burial Life is born anew:
O faithful grass of graves! — perchance when I
Change to the earth's desire, my soul shall take
Thy lesson of faith and joy and still renew
My journey onward for the journey's sake!

III

The earth is glad of travail and labouring:
The flower the whole sun's kiss is spent upon,
The leaves light, as of sea depths smitten with sun
And musical with incessant murmuring, —
Bound as a girdle, the strong sea's silver ring,
Where thro' and thro' the deep, clear hair of night
Stars tread the chattering tides and swollen with light
Moon walks beneath the slow dawn's fervent wing, —
Earth, sea, — to them the large, fresh, passionate deed
Of life is glad and wise — how wise is faith!
Life's harvest flowers, death sows the exhaustless seed:
We probe the intention till the soul has won
Vista, — awake at last! Yea! journeying on
Equal and wise and free with life and death!

IV

How long the impassive feet of Time have trod
The myriads and their monuments to dust!
How long the frailest, loveliest leaves have trust!
How long life urges in the reeking sod!
The flower is witless of a master's rod,
The sunlight warms the unjust with the just,
The he-bird, joyous in his vernal lust,
Carols in native ignorance of God.
And, when the travesty of God's control
And human reason leave us at the last
Naked before the all-receptive Soul,
Incurious of the ends of life and death,
Numb with the monstrous effort of our past,
We pray the bird for joy, the flower for faith.

V

Most lone and loveliest star, in glimmering spheres
Of twilight hung, as tho' the lids of night,
In one liquescent utterance large as light,
Let fall the delicate silver of her tears;
Monotonous music mute to mortal ears,
Vibrant as birds that cry across the bright
Silence and thro' the distance tense and white,
Where loud as life the incessant dawn appears.
Thou art, O star, how like a conscious soul
Leaving the shadowy shores of life to blend
Deep in the lustre of its native sea!
Or like, in heaven, the pure and liquid toll
Of one unechoing bell to mark the end
Of God's rule and man's infidelity!

VI

How many a wave, O shore of life, to thee
Has flowed, and murmuring, teased thine ignorance!
How many a derelict from the winds of chance
Has signaled some unguessed eternity!
The passion and pulse and power of all the sea
Fills the thin foam with fierce significance,
And thro' the sea-moods, to the deeper glance,
Pierces the same intention utterly.
Still, from life's shores to sea-ward, can the soul,
Glimmering in dawn, spread out a wider pool
Of light and vision till shadows flow to flame,
As one by one we dare include the whole
Of human change within our scope, nor school
Our hearts to virtue more than sin and shame.

VII

Mine is the bellowing, all-receiving sea,
Mine the long beaches blurred with drifted foam,
Mine the blind earth, the human lights of home,
The midnight shuddering, deepening endlessly.
Mine is the world to-night! Yea! Mine shall be
Vistas and vaster worlds, a certain dower,
When after faith, free love and conscious power,
Soul dares desire its own infinity.
Naught can be asked or given for all is ours:
Ours of all space the cold incessant miles,
Ours of all time the full, unstinting hours;
And ours the sea beyond, that round the warm
Shores of our being whiles will sleep and whiles
Breathe thro' the soul the epic voice of storm.

VIII

THE POET

He comes last of the long processional,
Last of the perfect lovers, doomed as they
To live ever more lonely day by day
By all rejected and condemned by all.
Hands stretch to hold him, passionate voices call,
Bright lips beseech him, — yet he cannot stay.
Treading in the large night his outward way
He learns how much the crowns are spiritual.
His heaven is godless since his faith is whole;
No thing but finds in him a perfect love,
No flower, no star but buds within his soul.
Labor and sleep, the warmth of home belong
To all but him, — he feels instead thereof
His heart's blood smelted to the ore of song.

ODE TO THE SEA

Lure me, O musical motions of the sea,
Thou of the cosmic heart most mighty mood!
And breathe beside me once again, O ye
Intimate whispers of the outlawed wind!
And grant, O Earth of long maternity,
While dawn grows golden like an infant God
Who walks the young world's twilight nude and free,
Thy latest child the rest he cannot find!

Still as I sought thee soul and flesh were fain!
Before the flower of sunset, one by one,
Scattered its petals like a golden rain,
Before the twilight clear as amethyst
Covered my lidless eyes, within my brain
Seemed, in the lasting silence of the sun,
All life as interludes of uttered pain
That scar the lips of Heaven's mute Agonist!

I am the heir to Time's exceeding dower:
Ease me, thou minstrel of the changeless theme!
Now while the midnight yields the mystic flower
Of moondawn, violent as a sanguine stain,
Like love's desire that in night's loneliest hour
Dawns thro' the empty twilight of a dream,

Mend with thy music-threads of faith and power
Life's raiment ruinous with surmise and pain!

Moon-like the motion of thy rhythmic cries
Has lured how many a sea of tears to flood!
How many a time thy sacramental sighs,
Swelling the daedal veins of silence, bring,
In eastern chambers where the darkness dies,
Thro' Death's half-fallen veil of solitude,
Desirous tears, sad eucharist of eyes
Last opening over earth's essential spring!

Soon shalt thou feel the miracle of light
Soft as the distant music of a shell;
Thy voice that creeps around the world to-night
Breathes from long vistas of deciduous years,
Since first thy bitter waters void of sight,
Sterile of seasons, on earth's valleys fell
As fall like darkness in the soul the bright
Burden of life's insuperable tears!

Soothe me! For when the sundawn gilds thy tide,
Poised like love's lotos on life's perilous stream,
When flower by flower the earth grows open-eyed,
Almost I would to God my soul were drawn
Where body and soul seem nearly to divide,
Till, lapsed from life's dark labyrinth of dream,

ODE TO THE SEA

I ceased in darker solitudes and wide
Eventual silence of the ripening dawn.

Louder than cymbals, on thy silver breast
The gold of sunrise falls — our loneliness
Ends with the shadows and the vain unrest
Of life returns like long-familiar pain.
Grant me the soul's deep truth thy voice expressed,
The power to live in human tenderness,
Yea! tho' I pass, repass, and never rest
Still bound to life and death's immortal chain!

Then shall the seas of soul be like to thine,
Endless in stately vistas drowned in sun;
Then shall I take thy perilous call for sign,
Then shall I leave the world's familiar shore
Seizing the soul's inheritance for mine;
Then, while the huge horizons merge to one
All-welcoming sphere, O then the Ship Divine
Lost in the daybreak shall return no more!

ODE TO THE EARTH

I

O TIRELESS earth! O earth of long desire!
Old earth whence now the gradual leaves transpire,
Earth of eternal seasons, let me feel
The folded flower of thy returning spring
Thrill with the urge of life's divine appeal!
Grant me, O earth, the faith thy seasons bring!

Thro' silent airs, from sky to sky,
The effluent tides of darkness pour,
With foam of fire against the sunset's shore;
And now, as one by one the bird-cries die,
Singly thine ancient silences redeem
Spaces that verge a sea of sleepy sound,
And, 'stablished thro' the immobile dusk, they seem
Like song but lately ceased, while on the wound
Of daily life descends the balm of dream.

II

O earth across thy sentient sleep,
Like silent maidens, one by one,
Meseems thy countless days, dead daughters of the sun,
Their unforgetful journey keep.

Meseems beneath the masque of night,
Clear in thy dreams, their large, remorseful eyes
Always are overflowed with quenchless light;
While, from their cataract of golden hair,
Falls an ethereal fragrance and their shattered skies
Are swayed with elemental tides of air.
For surely when the world is fain
Of thy desire that never dies,
Thy toil of child-birth stirs again
The mighty legend of thy memories,
Till, even as when the feet of Lilith pressed
Thy fruitless sod and roused the tardy spring,
Pale in thy florid sleep, thy daughters bring
Thrills of remembrance yearning in thy breast,
And this to-night is stirred, as one by one,
Rain-robed or bright with raiment of the sun,
Like some processional of barefoot boys,
They move across thy dream and all their pain,
Their gifts, too generous, and their splendid joys
Seem like loved voices lost and heard again.

III

Surely as, when the firmamental airs
Grow, in a warm and lovelier noonday, sweet
With flowers thy fruitful bosom bears,
Forth from thy vistaed memories flow
Thy life's unnumbered days that tread with ghostly
feet

Thy large and dreamful slumber, so
Seen in the truth of thine essential mood,
All things that were return and none can die
Save for the ends of life. God knows if I,
Tired with all the task of time,
Died at thy breast, my cold and pulseless blood
Would stir to feel the essential ichor climb
The world's wide uplands, or beside
My cheek the winds grow warm, or on my mouth the sweet
Savour of sunrise, or against my naked side
The thrust of earliest grass, the chill of dew.
Yea! even my mere mute flesh would wake anew,
O earth of graves and flowers, as thou dost take
The burden of new birth for mere life's sake!

IV

Grant me to know thy larger love! If I
Alway must go, beneath the self-same sky,
Thro' life and death and can no more depart, —
Grant, if I wisely serve thy large commands,
That rivers of thine own rhythm drown my heart!
For now meseems my life is grown,
Vain as a shattered bowl
To hold the essential vintage of the soul.
Change me from small endeavors crazed to win
Mean ends for aims whose littleness is sin
To moods profound, effusive, all thine own;

Till, flower by flower I understand
As day by day the miracles expand!

V

Now spring from seaward blows, anon
The winds grow cold as one by one
They take the withering leaves, — thro' storm and calm
Thy lips are flowing with the eternal psalm
Of moving seas, but still beneath the masque
Of seas and seasons in their tireless task
Thy mood is silence and thy gift is grace!
Tho' endless years replenish and efface,
Thou art as one whose soul beneath the test
Of human agony and human strife,
This restless interlude of life,
Is conscious of eternal rest
In spheres whose very scope is peace!
Thou sayest that life shall never cease,
Yet now I dream that death has ceased to be
And life has ceased; Yea! Life appears to me
A bowl of Lethean wine whose margin's curve
Is burned and bitter with the eager kiss
Of myriads tortured by the thirst they serve.
While in my dreams thy natural pieties
Seem as the phases of the soul that is
But neither lives nor dies!
And when at last my visions fade to this

ODE TO THE EARTH

Level of lawn, and when thy silences
Are mightily 'stablished, as the emphatic hand
Of darkness stays the cries of sleepy birds
And turns the golden breezes blind and bland,
Then all my dreams, desires and words
Depart and leave me silent with the deep
Meanings of silence; thro' my darkened mind
Light buds, as now, thro' tides of warmer wind,
Stars blossom on the night, and life seems large as
sleep.
Then idly, tenderly, my hand
Falls on thy flowers still fresh with happy rain
And wise with tears I seem to understand
The purposes of pain!

THE JOURNEY ON

I

My lips shall kiss thy brows!
Thy blood — now in my heart perchance the pulse of it! —
Shall fall upon my face from all the thorns.

Of their dead lives who killed and felt the scorn,
Thy pity, — all its justice, vista, faith,
How utterly dim, unguessed, or briefly seen
As tho' a starred night thro' a wall's interstice glimpsed or sea-view caught between the crouching hills, —
When once, in some long-hence, prepared arrival,
Realized and known by me, in me comprised,
Shall round the soul's slow spheres and lift a larger horizon!
Then all the strewing of light in all thy ways,
(Now even I glimpse thee by the self-same light)
Shall flow between our eyes incessantly;
Then as my lips gleam crimson from thy brows
And feel thy lips — the comrades kiss at last!

II

Long hence thou shalt acclaim me!

In retrospect of mine how many a god! —
Fauns, stream-side nymphs, in twilights of mid-May
Shy hamadryads and reluctant ghosts,
Ishtar in Babylon who trod
Hearts of fierce lovers in her wine-press out,
Setebos, Hapi and the phallic Min,
Thoth with a mystic wisdom, Iahveh, Baal,
Ra, and the glorious, strange moon-father Sin,
Golden Apollo with the throbbing throat,
White Aphrodite in the mid-seas blue —
These, and of all my mythic infancy the dim and
elder gods,
Gods that no legend hints, no indirection proves,
I, journeyed on in paths by them untrodden,
On seas unhinted in their charts, their indications,
prophecies,
After an age of years turning, resume, interpret:
These, now with negligent arms about my neck,
Grave heads against my breast, deep eyes to mine,
Come face to face at last, at last acclaim me!

So thou, Essenian of the later Gods,
As these my childhood's aspirations one by one,
After long journeys done, dreams realized, thoughts
explored, faint indications proved,

THE JOURNEY ON

Meet me and mate me with deep, quiet eyes —
I knowing we all are equal Gods at last —
And kiss my naked brows and send me forth
Vaster by them, by love and knowledge of them —
So thou! — the pause returned, the vaster task resumed, the distance measured, —
Surely my soul shall find thee somewhere waiting then!
Surely mine eyes, sphered to how vast a light,
Shall tally thine, surely my neck shall feel
The strength and tenderness of thy sweet pierced hands,
Surely thy brows shall share with mine — we equal Gods at last! — the sacred burden of thy human blood,
The while thy sad, pierced feet, in all my ways,
Equally go with even pace with mine, by open roads, by open seas vistaed before us, still untrod, uncrossed by thee or me,
As we together take the long, long journey on!

FOR E. L.

I

She stands before me till the space grows void,
And round her form the desert's sterile heat
Throbs with the tread of strong, impassive feet
And song in fanes She builded and destroyed.
The tideless waters swell and fall, the beat
Of sunlight thrills along her limbs and glows
On jade and turquoise, and her even brows
With myrrh and natron seem forever sweet.
She, child of mightier days and larger loves,
Stands like a silence in the sound of life,
And recent things about her beauty seem
Vain and unlovely as our human strife;
Wise and ineffable as Truth She moves
As moves a great thought thro' a foolish dream.

II

She moves in the dusk of my mind like a bell with the sweetness of singing
In a twilight of summer fulfilled with the joy of the sadness of tears,
And the calm of her face and the splendid, slow smile are as memories clinging
Of songs and of silences filling the distance of passionate years.

FOR E. L.

She moves in the twilight of life like a prayer in a heart that is grieving,
And her youth is essential and old as the spring and the freshness of spring;
And her eyes watch the world and the little, low ways of the sons of the living
As the seraph might watch from the golden, grave height of his heaven-spread wing.

She moves in the darkness of Time from the centuries large as her spirit;
From the magic of elder religions when the epic desires were strong,
And the old, grave glories that She, of the living, alone may inherit
Flow back from the harp of the past like the notes of ineffable song.

She moves thro' the trivial days in the might of the peace of her presence;
And, sweet as the death of a child, in the still high places of thought,
Her soul in the hunger of life is appeased in a perfect florescence,
Apart from the shadows and dust that our little desires have sought!

III

Why are you gone? I grope to find your hand;
The light grows secret as your tenderness;
My tears that fall for utter loneliness
Seem sad as sunset in an alien land.
Old simple words that you could understand
And only you, are striving to possess
My lips with utterance and their weariness
Burns with the fever of a vain command.

Why are you gone? The large winds, seaward bound,
Tell of long journeying in the endless void.
Why are you gone? I strain to catch the sound
Of footsteps, watch to see the dark destroyed
Before your lustrous fingers that would creep
Over my eyes and give me strength to sleep!

IV

Pour down thy hair between the world and me!
Between myself and my exhausted soul
Spread, in the dreadful vistas where my goal
Saddens and fails, thy love's euthanasy!
Fold me away from Time and let me be
Silent and ceased from bitterness, be thou
Tacit as childhood and thine ivory brow
Thoughtless, and be thou tender utterly!
Strength, give me strength to spare the futile tears!

FOR E. L.

Give me the consciousness of something proved:
Faith, wisdom, personal and briefly true.
I sift the scant, earned knowledge of my years
Like dust between my hands, and all I loved
And hoped and dreamed dissolves and blends to
you!

V

She turned the falling light to fire,
Dull fire throughout her sombre hair;
It seemed She phrased the world's desire,
Desire that woke with fervent prayer
Thrills of a secret wonder everywhere.

Her eyes caught splendours from the sun,
Vague airs grew warm about her face,
She saw the fire-stained ripples run
And sing to sleep the smouldering space
Of sunset and sink whispering on her trace.

Height over height the skies caught fire: —
She watched the red contagion flow,
The wide, wild wings of flame aspire
Till heaven uplifted seemed to grow
A huge, domed sapphire paved with crimson snow.

Her lips were still and marvellous,
But, like a lute whose silence sings,

Her hand fell warm in mine and thus
  Told me imperishable things:
She held my senses as a perfume clings.

My mind was like an ancient town
  Of shadows carved in moonlight, there,
Like dreams thro' latticed casements blown,
  The twilight of her endless hair
Brought stately visions, sweet and sad and fair.

Along the towers and walls of thought
  They hung bright banners flown with song,
The crooked, unlitten byways caught
  Their fires, and, as they passed along,
My dull, wild heart woke strangely and was strong.

So fire fell back from sky to sky,
  Night deepened down the purple sea:
She turned her solemn eyes and I,
  In wonder and in certainty,
Still touched her hand and still it sung to me.

VI

Thy breast is stainless as a star, thy hand
  Is calm and white and slow and thou dost come
  Sweet as a long-remembered song of home
  Heard thro' the twilight of an alien land.

Thine eyes are pure and still, they understand
More than our thoughts surmise, and stately dreams
Hover about thee and thy presence seems
Calm with a ceaseless custom of command.
With memories of thy face the ways of time
Are splendid, and my hours divinely stirred
With tremor and silence as of unshed tears.
Thou dost resume, as tho' the sea's sublime
Music were uttered in a single word,
The warm magnificence of earlier years.

VII

O murmur and passionate silence of to-night!
Earth of sublime arrival! — Let there creep,
Like music thro' the muffled gloom of sleep,
Tremors of Life's imperishable might,
Whether from airs that range the steep starred height
Of heaven, or where the delicate dew is deep
On grass and flowers, or where the bird-cries leap
Loud down the pathways mute and bare with light.
Fabric of night, O easeful rest, O airs
Kissing her cheek, O flowers that feel her feet,
O Life, O earth's impetuous utterance! —
We stand to-night the fit and faithful heirs
To Life's inheritance, — the power, the sweet
Strong motive, and the Soul's ecstatic trance!

VIII

Star of the sumptuous dusk and silent air,
Thou loveliest child and latest-born of night,
Jewel that binds the solemn brows of light
Swept by its lustre of luxurious hair;
O star of sundawn like a thread of prayer
Weaved thro' the fabric of a song of bright
Echoes and passionate notes of life's delight: —
O throbbing heart of heaven, unstained and bare!
Thou, in thy twilight, art as tho' her hand
Dawned thro' the glamour of a gorgeous dream;
And as to me her loveliness is shed
Thro' depths of ancient time, I see thee stand
Exalted and thro' endless space thy beam
Fall pure and steadfast on the world I tread.

IX

1

She moves beside the leaping sea,
Along the beaches fledged with foam;
The winds go seaward wearily,
The waves seem children straying home.

The golden breath of day retires
Between the crimson lips of cloud,
She seems, amid the smouldering fires,
Like starlight thro' a burning shroud.

FOR E. L.

I say, "The toiling sea is old,
The function lasts, the form is change;
Yon wave that falls in splintered gold
In every drop is fresh and strange.

"Thine eyes are deep as fluent pools
Of starlight — Yet despite of thee
The world despairs of death — O fools,
Behold the fresh and stainless sea!

"The sea that felt the loveliest far
And eldest God of earth transpire,
Her flesh more radiant than a star, —
The sea is young and cannot tire!

"The myriad waters run in ways
Where moved a million tides before,
So you aspire thro' all my days
The same yet strange forevermore!"

2

The sunset spins its splendid skein,
The sea-birds pass with fearless eye,
The daylight falls in golden rain
To gardens of a vaster sky.

I say, "Like some sonorous bell,
Flame-forged to call for war or prayer,

Debased to chime a vulgar spell
And phrase the pain of vulgar care, —

"So they, for whom their lies suffice,
Who fear the splendid task of love,
Who choose the world and pay the price,
Are dead, — their lives are proof thereof!

"But now they seem as something gone
A long, long while, and I may stand
And hear the calm sea monotone,
And watch thy face and touch thy hand."

3

The stars come few and full as tears,
The dark absorbs her fold on fold;
She seems a song of earlier years,
A myth the lips of heroes told.

She turns, the twilight clothes her shape,
The sands she treads seem moist with blood;
Measured and low from cape to cape
Sea-music thrills the evening's mood.

I say, "The wondering-up of love,
The float of incense and the gloom
That warmed of old thine altars, move
About thee like a dull perfume.

"And like a ship of glimmering pearl,
My heart adventures far to sea:
The urge of wind, the breaker's curl
Seem promptings of infinity.

"Day dies and night along my trace,
Thy hair, the gloom and glow thereof,
Surrounds me, and thy solemn face
Is dawn across the seas of love!

"Behold thou art like sleepy wine
In all my sense, and now at last
Thy human hours of life are mine
And all thy strong, sonorous past!"

X

Ours is the day of soul-despair,
The glimmering faith, the scanted sight;
But thine the dim, deserted night,
And, dark as moonlight thro' thy hair,
The stately, solitary air.

Ours are the years of foolish strife,
Of small desires and smaller gain;
But thine, beyond the toil and pain,
Inert, unstirred by death or life,
The changeless Truth that proves us vain.

FOR E. L.

Ours are the trivial joys, the tears,
  The toil whereat our lives are priced;
  But thine, with nothing sacrificed,
The harvest of unnumbered years,
The silence where the soul appears.

Ours is a short, sad sentience, ours
  Brief time and then forgetful sleep;
  But round thy face thy memories keep
Strange vigil, and the lotos-flowers
Of Egypt scent thy living hours.

Ours are the life and death that seem,
  Ours is the race, but thine the goal,
  And thine the calm, unhindered soul
That holds the dreamer and the dream
As notes in one harmonious theme.

We damn and praise, we crown the few
  With power and fame — a fading wreath;
  In thine alembic Life and Death
Unite: beyond our partial view
Thy calm eyes know that all is true!

Thy vision sphered to vaster skies,
  Thy breast that keeps, serene and strong,
  The pulse of earth's eternal song,

Thy hands that stir not and are wise,
Thy face of epic centuries,

Thy soul that sees beyond the tomb,
Thy faith of wise and perfect love,
Thy heart that time is lyric of —
They know thro' life and death we come
Thee-ward like children straying home.

XI

Thine is the silence of a night of mist,
Thine is the wonder of a night of stars,
Thine is the body, a solemn eucharist,
And thine the face, the eyes no shadow mars
Save of thy hair the twilight pale as amethyst.

Thine is the voice, phrased echo of the sea,
And thine the mood of statues black with moon,
Staring, inert, with eyes too tense to see,
Eastward thro' deserts desperate with noon;
Thine is the day-spring of the world's eternity.

Thy breast is perfumed of forgotten flowers,
Thy dreams and destinies are old as youth
That thrills, in chorus of memorial hours,
The longing and the laughter of thy mouth;
Thy soul is proud and calm with long-immortal powers.

Thine is the portent of a deathless thing,
Thine is the passion of a mortal change,
Thine is the love — Ah God! — to cleave and cling,
And thine the lover, violent and strange,
To tune the lyre for thee, despair and break the string,
Lest song turn discord tried beyond its range!

XII

Thine is the joy of life's transcendent hours,
Thine is the grief of childish memories,
Thy footsteps seem to fall on fragrant flowers,
Strewn for the feet of grave Divinities;
Thine eyes recall forgotten pieties.

Deep in thy breast the sacred perfume lingers,
Breathed from the lotos that were wont to hang
Rose o'er the sistrum in thy rhythmic fingers,
When thro' the shrine's mysterious twilight rang
Thy voice and all the unseen respondents sang.

Thine are the powers of Gods that now are nameless,
Still on thy face there seems to fall the glow
Of fires that flared on shrines for ages flameless,
Still where the diadem pressed thy faultless brow
Heavy with gems, the dimples linger now.

Age after age the myriads live and perish,
Theirs the harsh conflict and the sordid gain;

FOR E. L.

Thine is the wisdom souls alone may cherish,
Thine is the truth that heals the essential pain
Of time and change and makes death's conquest vain.

Life is a spark the night of death encloses,
Somewhere is sunrise if the soul is sooth;
And thou in life's brief hour of thorns and roses
Showest the fashion of a deathless youth,
The solemn portent of a final truth.

THE SONNETS OF ISHTAR

" Omnibus incutiens blandum per pectora amorem
Efficis ut cupide generatim saecla propagent."
— LUCRETIUS.

I

I AM the world's imperishable desire;
Life is because I will, for hope of me
Life is, nor all the dark depths of the sea
Could quench mine eyes' light nor my body's fire.
Fresh hyacinth and the violent rose suspire,
The black clod breaks to green eternally,
Sap thrills to parturition the naked tree, —
Of all things living I only cannot tire.
I am the world's interminable sin;
Yea! In my power and lust beyond control,
Things mortal wage the war of life and win.
For me the slave defies the master's rod,
And while the antique pride swells within his soul
The man reclaims his liberty of God!

II

My face lives always in the quenchless light,
Frail gold of twilight burns across my breast,
The red dusk girds me and my limbs are pressed
In warm, wan shadows deepening down to night.

My hair, red gold on brows of faultless white,
Inspires earth's children to my fatal quest;
Youth's passionate face in mortal hope of rest
Grows blind against me, wearying of my might.
With ravenous lips men scourge my lustrous flesh
And crowd the quivering dusk with nameless sin;
Death takes them, still insatiate, from my mesh.
Viewless, my feet pash down the one who dies,
While, sprung aloft from earth he festers in,
I watch the last-born laughing in mine eyes!

III

Once was my name as fire, and once my wine
Flushed in the veins of youth, and once the strong,
The wise, the lyric, leaped beneath my thong
Of love and hailed me human and divine!
Mine was the world's confessed desire and mine
The echoing thunder of the seas of song,
Priests, virgins, youths — a florid, sumptuous throng —
Gave me luxurious service at my shrine!
Now tho', bereft, I seem perchance as one
Smothered in night whose memory keeps the flush,
The fire and huge transcendence of the sun,
Still, in the apostate world, my fight I know
Is won, and still the lips of manhood crush,
And still the pained blood throbs thro' limbs of snow!

IV

For me, the eldest and the loveliest God,
For me and for my equal happiness
The woman aches with sweet maternal stress,
The slow seed breaks beneath the reeking sod.
For me the strong, swift feet of dawn are shod
With fire, for me the flowers' frail petals press
Fearless and faithful, and warm winds caress
The violet sea-ways where of old I trod.
For me the long, resounding years return
With gradual seasons, and the stately sun
Shepherds thro' void infinity his brood;
And only thro' my knowledge man may turn,
To larger consciousness the soul has won,
Leaving his outworn body for my food.

AD SERVAM

SAPPHICS

1

Day through, night through rest never gave its guerdon,
Life unfolded never its heart's rejoicing,
Sleep stood wrapped in visions of endless waking,
Pale and relentless.

2

Dawn spread fire, the moon with its meagre twilight
Died, the trees grew full of fresh sound and shadow;
Bit with flame the implacable night, the sleepless
Shrivelled like parchment.

3

Day with dumb, white hours like scourges smote me,
Drop by drop day's river of sunlight drenched me,
Sight and sound day's weariness wrought upon me,
Wrought as with iron.

4

So was night shed silent as sifted ashes,
Dim and sweet the invisible spring suspired,
Voiced with song, earth's passion of parturition
Toiled in the twilight.

5

Over earth the shadows were shod with silence,
Night descended ample and rapt and faultless;
Still was rest withholden and, pale and lidless,
Sleep overglanced me.

6

Sleep! — Dark page unlettered in life's sad volume —
Not for me thy cession of ceased remembrance,
Not for me thy dreamless, impassive mercy —
Thou hast denied me!

7

Fierce as fever blurred with fantastic fancy,
Night through, Life, with resonant lips convulsive,
Violent hands and eyes of incessant silence,
Smote and enslaved me.

8

All my flesh cried: "Symbol of starved desire,
Pain of all pains weariest, thou hast cursed me
Now with tears and now more cruel with laughter,
Hurt and caressed me!"

9

Then I cried to Death with exceeding anguish,
Prayed her thus — "O, Angel of tender wisdom!

Wrap my brows in infinite night, in final
Folds of thy cere-cloth!"

10

Then dislimned Life's image; the brawl and babble
Ceased; yea, Life, the implacable Life relented,
Turned and, mute as tho' to disclose its meaning,
Leaned to caress me.

11

Then I saw the shadowless eyes, the scarlet
Lips of laughter, lust and of little whispers,
Whispers low and languid with fierce dominion —
Life was translated!

12

Cried I then: "O, pity for me, O mighty
Gods of altars white as the limbs of lovers" —
Then She laughed and suddenly, burned and broken,
Soul was defeated!

13

Thro' me smote her silence of stolen secrets,
Dear, too dear for words and too sweet for music,
Till She grew, in subtle and grievous longing,
Fervent as bloodshed.

14

Then I saw the glamour of limbs uncovered,
Saw the fresh, frail curves of her body broken,
Saw the mouth, the eyes, everlasting vision
Moist with her passion.

15

Soul was spent, flesh severed with sharp desire, —
Flame on flame the print of her paces smote me,
Yea! the song and sway of her eager body
Surged in my senses.

16

Long I lay immobile, in monstrous struggle,
Endless waking, weariness tense as harp strings,
While the sobbing pulse of her blood against me
Beat thro' my body.

17

Briefly then I knew why the sleepless demon
Life, endured with sorrow and sound incessant,
Knew why all the veins of my body filtered
Wine for her thirsting.

18

Even Death, the goal and delight of living,
Wrapped with earth's thick shadows, the sea's dense
silence,

Death, I knew, as Life in the day and night-time,
Paled and grew sentient.

19

She, I knew, beneath my unlifting eyelids,
Dark with dust or blind with the weight of waters,
She could still, with fiery fingers, sever
Death from its shadow!

20

Yea! the cool, kind fingers of Death would kindle;
Sleep is scared and darkness too weak to wall me;
Naught conceals my soul from her soul's desire,
Slave She enslaves me!

21

So that now my body and soul in grievous
Love cry out — "O God, I would choose her nervous
Fierce caress, tho' even the wings of slumber
Closed to enfold me!"

22

Tho' my sleepless hours like fire and fever
Burn my brain and all of my body suffers,
Tho' my soul is famished, my heart leaps out in
Wild supplication;

23

Cries — "O thou, Implacable Aphrodité,
Thou, whose feet flow flame and whose laughter lightens
Down the trackless ways of the heart where bright blood
Burns on thy traces! —

24

"Thou, of Gods most pitiless, sumptuous, sanguine —
When I burn out body and soul and perish,
Let my cinders, sifted thro' some sad twilight,
Fall in Her pathway!

25

"Where Her feet fall, yea! and beneath Her paces
Let me lie in dust and with dust be mingled,
Thrilled as now to feel of Her flesh the burden
Bruise me in passage!

26

"There, tho' stamped and scattered, Her feet could thrill me,
Yea! till flowers from out of my dust transpired
Still to lure Her fancy and still to feel Her
Mine as she crushed them!"

TANNHÄUSER TO VENUS

I HAVE learned the inevitable destinies
By sheer endurance of thy careless love!
Yet with a human and so needful hope,
A desperate guess, I dare confront thy will
And task with doubt thy flushed divinity:
Hear me! O Goddess, hear my last surmise!

I have watched thy face and seen the seasons pass,
And now I know that memory cannot be
Where death is not nor any mortal change.
Thou art immortal, therefore all thy life
Is now, — the hours go by and leave no trace!
O monstrous thought! Would I could ask thee where
And how they fare, the insatiable men,
Lovers of thine whose blood besmeared thy feet,
Whose wild hearts perished as in fire, whose bones
Gleam white as starlight in the paths of time!
O where's it passed, the strong processional,
The young men and young women pale as fire,
Life's desperate mariners who glimpsed thee forth —
Pharos that lamped the starless night of time —
And sought thee even on death's engulfing seas? —
Tell me of them! Thy brows are pure of thought!
Yet had thine epic lovers of yesterday

Lips and strong hands more fierce than even are mine;
Their violent will and weak humanity
Suffered as mine to feel thy deathless youth!
Then tell me — for, by heaven, my extreme plight
Lies bare before thee — if such men who strode
Young in the young world are lapsed away
Body and soul leaving no trace at all,
Then where for me, for me who once foreswore
My sweet Lord Christ, the strong and stainless God,
Is triumph or hope or any tenderness?
Am I more mighty than so much of time,
So mighty and so wilful of my cause
That, by extreme desire, I may contrive
To give thee mortal memory and pain and tears,
Feel thy heart falter and reduce to death
The fashion of thy memorable flesh?
Is this my only hope? Certain it is
My whole life, harnessed to thine endless task,
Toils without recompense, a merest tool
Serving the vast monotony of fate;
Certain it is that through eternal time
No death can make the sight of my dazed eyes
Grow bland or cool my fingers of thy feel!
And therefore, drifted in the dreadful past,
I shall be left a derelict on the shores
Of thine oblivion that bear, I know,
Wreckage of all the years and of all men!
Certain it is — unless — O give me power

And light! For in the midnight of despair
I seem to glimpse the dawn of a huge hope
That fires a pathway to my utmost goal!
Not thine the power! I go from thee to me!
Mine is the task — to teach my human soul
The vastness of the immortal mood and thus
Lift my fierce life to immortality!
O hope great beyond all hope yet not vain!
Haply I fail — yet I have known thy love
And served with life the soul's divinest end
Since the extreme of all things leads to truth.
Therefore I am content. Lift up thy hands
And pour thy golden cataract of hair
Over my face, then kiss me through the coils! —
The frailty of my heart that does thee wrong,
Memory, and grief for human joy and pain
Shall cease. Behold me fit to bear thy love!
I will no more desire the sea-wind, cool
At sunrise, nor the lesser joys than Thou:
The clasp of friends and the low lights of home!

TWILIGHT

Deep in thy lap I lay my head,
Deep in my soul thy words resound;
Thy lips where mine so lately bled
Gleam like a wound.

Now, in the sad reluctant light
The passionate silence of thy mood,
I feel thy robe's perfume, and night
And solitude.

Till in the solitude I feel
The breaking heart, the dazzled brain
Pulse with a longing tense as steel
And more than pain.

More than all pain and all delight,
All laughter and convulsive tears,
More than all sleep in all the night
Of endless years.

Thy robe's perfume is deep and warm,
The dusk is deep and sad and low:
I cannot save thee from love's harm
Nor let thee go.

TWILIGHT

I have nor strength nor will to save
Thy life from my desire or me.
I hold thee, Mistress still and Slave
Eternally!

SONG

I AM the soul of desire,
The pleasure, the passion, the prayer;
O, when shall my love for thee tire?
Beloved, thou art fearfully fair
And I am the soul of desire!

I am the soul of desire,
I call with the tones of the sea,
With the infinite yearn of the sea.
I am thrilled with my love as a lyre
Is thrilled with the songs that transpire
For love, and I thirst as a fire
For thee!
For thy indolent hands and thy hair—
O beloved! thou art fearfully fair
And I am the soul of desire!

I am the soul of desire,
O where shall I find thee?
My love shall consume thee entire,
My passion shall bind thee!
For a day and a night and a morrow,
Thy body and soul shall be mine
Till the laughter of love and the sorrow

Are shed thro' thy senses like wine.
Where thy bosom is bare
My love shall suspire;
Thou art fair, O beloved, thou art fearfully fair!
And I am the soul of desire!

SONNETS

I

Strong saturation of sea! O widely flown,
Far winds of fall, your litanies of pain
Moan like the music of a wild refrain
Heard thro' the midnight of a feudal town!
Young night is lipped with jasper where the blown
Burden of evening lights intensely wane,
And, shuddering seaward from the tawny plain,
Vague fold on fold the enormous dark comes down.
Gusty and fervid as the sleepless sea
The passionate fancies of a formless fear
Spring in my nervous brain like monstrous flowers;
The night, the wind-chant work their will of me,
And thoughts like death-bells echoing far and near,
Toll for life's lost, irrevocable hours.

II

How many a life must thou the journey keep,
O soul, thro' sexual seasons of the years?
O heart, how many a harvest of thy tears
Shall life's sharp sword of unfulfillment reap?
The breath of dawn shall blow — haply with tears! —
How oft, O heart, O soul, before the deep
Darkness and still eternity of sleep
Bring natural justice for life's long arrears?
Ah! when my rose of life is ripe to fall,
Pray God I sink thro' gardens of the sun
Till the dead fingers of oblivion
Constrain my heart, and there lie over me
The tideless waters and the eventual
Darkness of death's unlit, unlifting sea!

III

Come home to me at last! Come home to me!
Bring me thy youth of tears and great desires;
Frail round thy tired head the music tires,
The music shed between the stars and sea!
While still thy youth is echoing with its free
Love-songs resounding like a storm of lyres,
Come with thy deeds and dreams; — and thro' the fires
Of wisdom sift the ash of memory.
Come home to me at last! Life whispers, "Come!"
Yea! thro' the mist of passions sad with loss,
Strong in the sumptuous dusk, the light of home,
The light of soul where thou must journey, lays,
While spring is sweet in all the old dear ways,
A splendour and a sacrament across!

IV

Hush, child! Be still and give thy fingers rest,
Thine eyes the darkness, and thy lips that press
Hard on the lips of life with fierce caress,
Ease from their hunger and thy guideless quest.
Ask of the vacant eyes and stirless breast
Of life's last angel, pale Forgetfulness,
Peace, and release from thought's eternal stress:
She, of life's violent, fervent Gods, is best.
Peace, child! Beneath her hand the fretful flame
Of long desire grows frail and faint as dream:
The immediate life is alien to despair.
Held on her heart seem life and death the same,
And nothing is at all and all things seem,
And if life dies thou shalt not even care!

V

Then cried the song of Life: "The flowers that fall,
Spendthrift of perfume, shall return again
Fed by the tireless earth and fragrant rain:
Far down the glimmering sea the musical
Lips of the dawn repeat their clarion call;
Always the heart shall kindle to regain
Love's young desire whose very strength is pain,
For life is love and love is best of all!"
Then breathed an elder music: "I am peace!
Peace of the silent soul, sphered in such wise
That no thing lives or dies, is pleased or sad
In me, where hope and prayer and struggle cease!
Wise with my light thy calm and steadfast eyes
Beholding death shall not be even glad!"

DEATH IN YOUTH

Thy lips grow cold against the lips of death,
And peace shall come: — be mild and unafraid!
Then, in the silence, like a tender breath,
Life's bloom of fever on thy cheeks shall fade
As now the sunset's weariest saffron slips
Over the moveless pallor of thy lips.

What tho' the lips of love are wet with tears?
Life was, thou sayest, magnificent and mine!
Youth was possessed of dreams, the abundant years
Thrilled like the freshness of a native wine!
Behold! The hope of life is death, the goal
Death that at last leads outward to the soul.

Haply forgetfulness shall come. Behold!
Day is a dream that haunts the elder night.
Still is the earth so young and thou so old,
Mute with thy memories flashed like shafts of light
Thro' rain-swept days forlorn with beaten bells,
Thy memories near and real as miracles.

As Life is stern be merciful and mild,
Solemn with joy as Life laughs loud with pain,
Silent as life is shrill. — O dying child,

DEATH IN YOUTH

Be all life is not, then was life not vain
Since soul proves victor when the fight is fought
And peace returns, profound and void of thought.

Banish the keen regret, the foolish tears,
Salt on the kiss that burned thy longing mouth!
Wisdom shall soon be perfect: all thy years'
Harvest, blown ashes of the gods of youth.
Now shall thy grief refrain, thy passions cease:
Silence has come and in the silence peace!

Thou must forget or else 't were vain to die,
Death with thy memories is not death at all;
Passion and pain and pleasure, thou and I,
Life and its longings, must, beyond recall,
Cease or unite or merge and death must come
Like seaward wind that takes the rain-drop home.

Death shall forget tho' life's immortal power
That gave thee strength to bear thy human fate
Suffer and strive. Thro' death the mystic flower
Of soul expands until thy youth's wise hate
Of life has utterly passed in love away,
While death prepares the spiritual day.

LULLABY

Sleep, ah! sleep in the light of the moon,
  Sleep, ah! sleep in the shadow of night,
For the hour of waking is soon, how soon!
  And swift are the feet of light!

Sleep, ah! sleep in the light of the stars,
  Sleep in the lull of the viewless airs,
For you wake to the world and its pitiful wars,
  The flesh and its sordid cares.

Sleep, ah! sleep in the hush of the heart,
  Dreamless, forget the return of strife,
When the curtains of shadow are stricken apart
  On the pitiless drama of life.

Sleep, ah! sleep in the light of the soul,
  In the measureless strength and the timeless peace;
Sleep! and be free of the mind's control
  In the prison of time and space.

Sleep, ah! sleep in the endless ways
  Of the shadow of Death, in the cool, kind earth,
Till the dark is dissolved in the golden haze
  Of the Dawn of a greater birth.

LULLABY

Sleep! for haply a night will come
  Where laughter is silent and none shall weep,
Where the Soul after infinite travel goes home
  At last to an endless sleep.

AFTER DEATH

She said:
Where shall my Soul be comforted,
My body be satiated
Since he is dead?

She said:
Since he is dead
Where shall my lips be fed that blushed and bled
Against his lips, and where my fingers cling,
My arms enfold, my voice thrill whispering?
My slow white hands shall fling
Over what secret, where,
The shadow of my hair?

She said:
Because the Man is dead
To Thee I yield my soul, Lord God.
I thought he could not die
Leaving the vistas of his life untrod;
I thought the mere desire of love sufficed
To thwart Death utterly,
For this how gladly soul were sacrificed!
Now he is dead I learn thy litany,
Lord God, and tame my lyric throat to prayer.
Once, for his kiss, my lips were red,
Now pale with tears they taste thy eucharist,

And all my hair he loved, my sombre hair
Lies sweet and heavy on the feet of Christ.

She said:
Lo! He is dead, Lord God, my love is dead!
Now, leaf by leaf,
Summer is fallen, earth grown mute and deaf,
And winter rigorous above his grave.
In heaven the angels have
Thy stars for choir and all thy sons for song,
They live before thy face,
Glad in the sweet suffusion of thy peace. —
My love is dead; Lord God, I do him wrong,
Where he lies hid
Lonely beneath his coffin-lid,
To pray thy grace in heaven,
Nor even
Can I by thee be comforted
Since he is dead.

She said:
Yea! tho' my love be dead,
I know that never sleep
Has shed her shadows on his lidless eyes; —
Always I wonder if the dead can weep!
The desolate wind is cold above his head,
The wall of night impervious where he lies
And shrill with withered things that agonize

As tho' his buried body changed to cries,
As tho' he called to me and said:
"My lips are jealous of the flesh of Christ
Thy lips have tasted in the eucharist,
Yea, of the heavy strewing of all thy hair
On Christ's sad feet!
My hands are jealous of thy sweet
White fingers cold in attitudes of prayer.
My heart is jealous of thy naked breast,
Crimson where late the altar's marble pressed,
Where once I took my rest;
And in the violent ways of love I trod
My soul is jealous of thy God!"

She said:
The stars of heaven are white with song,
The Sons of God forever young;
Dark is my love, O Lord, my love is dead!
Lonely beneath his shroud he cannot rest
Save where thy lilies fade against my breast.
Lord! it would do him wrong
And prove me faithless, if in Heaven
My soul grew pure and calm with God;
If, in the ways of good he never trod,
My heart were comforted.
She said:
I choose the seven
Sweet sins of love instead!

AFTER DEATH

She said:
Summer has died because my love is dead,
Winter is acrid as his sleepless eyes.
Yet shall the earth wherein his body lies
Thrill to the season's sun and soon be riven,
Till Life, desire and dream of death,
Leap forth and climb the hills of heaven
And earth grow violent with spring
That shall fling
On the beating of her breath
Foam of fresh flowers to the stainless sea.

She said:
Like the eternal spring, eternally
Shall love persist in my dead Love and me,
And Life, the elixir whence all love is fed,
Shall thrill between us so we cannot sever.
Lord God, we loved once and forever!
For both of us
Love is more marvellous,
Whether alone beneath the coffin-lid
Or lonelier and more desperate amid
The glad familiar ways of earth we trod,
Than Heaven with all its stars and hosts of song,
With all thy sons immaculately young,
And Thou Lord God!

WOMEN

FIRST

I

She said: "O take me! Let my life become
Part of your pleasure. As the rose that leaf
By leaf falls scented from the crimson sheaf
You loved, even so, until my life is numb
And bare with giving, till the total sum
Of joy my life contains, to serve your need
Is spent, till all the music of my reed
Is played to please you, till you leave me, dumb —
So am I yours! to love you till you tire
Of love. I give so little! — yet the whole:
The best and worst of me, my body and soul!
O take me! Yours the nobler part, to take
Unrecompensed my prodigal desire
That pains me and would kill me for your sake!"

II

He said: "Enough! I take you and repay
Nothing you give, but waste your sacrifice;
I let your body and soul alone suffice,
Your fierce love's largess lure me for a day.

Held in my power your soul shall cease to pray,
Your lips forget their pieties to entice
My lips, and death at last shall film with ice
Your desolate heart once drained and cast away.
Come to me! You shall utterly be turned
Into my pleasure, till my satiate sense
Sickens to see you, till your flesh is burned
Dry in my service, till the soul you staked
Against a careless kiss is lost, till hence
I drive you, with the thirst you nourished, slaked!"

III

She said: "Thank God! Beloved, I merely ask
Sufferance for love and me. My soul? I stake
It, swift to lose the bauble for your sake,
To spill the liquor as I break the flask!"
She held the cup: then suddenly the masque
Shattered before him, and the woman, real
And soul-transfigured with matured ideal,
Faced him — divine to meet her mortal task.
As sunlight breaks thro' vistas grey with rain,
The breathless truth broke briefly on his brain.
He paused and felt her fail to understand.
She, desolate, shuddered watching him depart;
The miracle of love's divine command
Filled him, the gospel of the human heart!

SECOND

I

"Sweet from my sin I rise before you, rise,
Wild as the vision and savour of the sea,
Bland as the shadow of sleep's euthanasy
Shed between burning lids and aching eyes!
Clothed in love's fire that damns and purifies,
Mistress and slave, I yield me utterly, —
Yours by the gods my love reveals to me,
The gods my pitiless passion crucifies!
Love for love's sake my body is born again
Thrilled with a new virginity, my soul
Lends my desire the dignity of pain.
For you my lips are fire, my naked breast
Profound as sleep and heavens of splendour roll
Over me, shattered with divine unrest!"

II

He said, "I take you. Yet the laughter slips,
Mocking your sacrifice. Be still! The phrase
Is vain since sense with equal joy repays
Loss of the soul we crush between our lips.
Where 's soul, my Mistress, when thy finger-tips
Drip wine till candles wither blaze by blaze,

And down thy breast no song can fitly praise
Pale drop by drop the ooze of daylight drips?
Why vex the mind? Why ponder — 'Mine the gain
Her gold against my dross; — the sacrifice
Damns in acceptance — Heart must yield the pain
Of Heart due reverence, give the greater gift
Denial?' To scruple so were over-nice. —
Drown me in all your hair my fingers lift!"

III

"Heart to my heart," she cried, "and mouth to mine!
Lie close! I feel you like the pulse of life!
Desire has pained my senses like a knife:
Lie close, that I may know my body thine!
Surely the pangs of love are all divine,
And haply tho' my ways of love be dark
Their depths may kindle with the saving spark!
At least my incense floats before the shrine!"
"Give me thy lips!" he cried — and then his mind
Suffered with truth. He said, "My soul was blind!"
"And mine," she said, "till love disclosed the light."
He fell beside her, "Speak!" he cried, "for me,
For me the loveless — where is hope?" And she
Soothed him as tho' a child who wept for fright.

AT DAYBREAK

I MARKED the hours beat by beat
And felt the silent night depart:
I held her, dead against my heart,
Beside the loud, incessant street.

Across the daylight drenched with rain
I heard the world's familiar strife,
My fingers held the pulse of life
That ran the shaking scale of pain.

Her body, bruised with love's embrace,
Grew cold, and where her lips were red
The dawn disclosed them grey and dead:
Her eyes were dumb — I kissed her face!

I kissed her tacit face and laid
My cheek on hers and caught her hand,
And guessed if God would understand
And find the joy of sin repaid!

Beside the loud, incessant street
I kissed her mouth and held her bound
Between my violent arms and found
Her mouth intolerably sweet.

AT DAYBREAK

I held her close, Ah! close to me
And kissed the scarlet ring that clasped
Her throat, where all my fingers grasped
And crushed her life out utterly.

I kissed her lips, her cheek, her hand,
My mouth was bitter salt with tears,
And she was dead. — If God appears
I wondered, will He understand?

THE FINAL WORD

Hear me! I say to you — "This love of ours
Can never be forgiven; nevermore
Shall I, in peace and silence, pass my door,
Sad with October sun and scattered flowers,
Unhaunted of thy memory as before.

"Nothing is virgin where thy feet have trod
The byways of my inmost heart, and where
My Soul stretched flowers to catch the skyward air,
Thy hands have sown with chaff the fields of God.
I know thy love is loveless as despair.

"I thrilled in soul, God knows my body fired,
Kindling thy perfect body, for the food
Whose sweetness proved pain sweet and evil good,
Till Life could no more bear what life desired,
Until the lips of life were crushed to blood.

"Now there is no forgiveness. Go or stay —
I cannot care, my love has been so great!
I am too tired now to love or hate;
While hour by hour I see, and day by day
Life's tears roll down the marble face of fate!"

TO C. L. G.

The old days come near to me like dead women with
pale and tender hands,
The gold of their hair shakes down about my face,
And the light of their eyes is tawny and sad like the
light of large, calm sunsets,
And their silence seems as a fragment of eternity.

The old days come near to me and thy presence is ever
among them,
The presence of thy childhood fresh and dear and
dead,
Thine infancy and mine!
Linked in a living memory, sad as love and death are
sad.

THE SONG OF MAN

O COME out with me to the New Gods, I have fathomed
the lies of the old,
And the pillars of Paradise crumble and the ashes of
Hell are grown cold.
I have striven and lived and remembered thro' the
range of the numberless years,
Until strange as a dawn in the midnight the goal of
my seeking appears!

I have dared in the spirit's conception, I have shaped
with the might of my hands,
Were the dreams of my ecstasy mortal? Yet godlike
I wrought their commands!
In the twilight of temples I builded, by the flames
of the altars I fed,
I have trembled and wondered and worshipped, yea,
bled as the sacrifice bled!

I have blinded the Soul's aspiration with torture and
triumph and pain,
I have died for a word, for an idol, for an idol, a word
I have slain,
In the fear of a merciless master I have bent like a
slave to the rod,

I have turned in my anger and questioned of God and
the judgments of God.

I have minted in marble and music the gold of the
heart of my youth,
And a maiden's desire has brought me the feast of the
fruit of her mouth.
I have folded my love as a mantle over limbs that
were naked for this,
I have broken my heart on a lute-string, and bartered
my soul for a kiss.

I have lived with my boys and my women for lust and
the laughter of lust
Till the Love-Goddess, mortal in marble, was shattered
to shards in the dust,
And when Life unrelenting renewed me and the soul
of me suffered for food,
I have waked to a new revelation, I have canted of
evil and good.

I have damned and divided in judgment, I have
'stablished the bounds of my blame,
I have tempted the soul with a vision, I have menaced
the flesh with a flame,
Till the voice of my God in his anger was like thunder
of wind on the sea,

Till I cowered and sinned and was secret, till I longed
and was feared to be free.

Till, too weak to face God in his heaven, too timid
to dare him in hell,
I defiled him with empty observance and I cheapened
his name to a spell;
With a blasphemy cynic with safety, with a cowardice
born of my greeds,
With the slime of respectable falsehood, I fashioned
a God to my needs.

I have lied in my soul as I muttered the prayers of the
priests that I paid,
I have lied in my heart as I sold it, I have lied for my
heart was afraid,
I have lied to the priests and the people, I have lied
to my body and soul
All the lies that the meanest of sins pays the meanest
of virtues for toll!

Then I sickened of lies and discovered in breathless
amazement — at last
Soul and Body, to-day and to-morrow released from
the ghosts of the past —
That, washed clear with the tears of my manhood,
song-bright with the poems of my youth,

Wonder-wide with long dreams and desires, my vision
was trained for the Truth!

Yea! the silence of time and its changes have left not
a God that was mine,
Yea! my fashions of faith have been faithless, yea!
my heart has been drained of its wine,
Yea! the lips of my women have withered, and for
gold I have minted my blood,
But at least I have learned thro' the ages all the lies
of the world and of God!

From the Syrian glades where the perfect, pale woman
grew mortal for love,
From the vortex of chaos with darkness shed under
and round and above,
In the depths of the twilight of Asia, in the myriad
ways I have trod,
I have tried all the fashions of living and served all
the phases of God.

I have merged in the spirit of Brahma, I have prayed
by the stream and the tree,
I have seen how She rose as a portent from the bitter,
blue ways of the sea,
In the name of the wise Galilean, by the sign of a mer-
ciful God,

I have plundered, enslaved, and smeared over the sin
with the silence of blood.

My blood from the altars of Ishtar has flowed to the
foot of the Cross,
It has dripped from the dewlaps of Seket and Venus
has laughed at my loss,
I have burned in the gardens of Nero, I have died in
the circus at Rome,
And the wine of God's mercy I prayed for was meagre
and bitter as foam.

I have served all the alien masters still-born from my
folly and fears,
I have laughed till I wept in derision, I have wept
till I laughed at my tears,
And I cry, "Thro' the range of creation and time I
have tested the whole, —
Then come out with me to the New Gods, the Great
Gods, Body and Soul!

"To the Gods who are sure and sufficient, who are
free and more fatal than Fate,
Who can tally the love of a virgin or the heart of a
man in his hate,
Who are wise with a perfect remembrance, who re-
ject not a creed nor a crime,

Who compassionate all, who interpret the ways and
the wonders of Time!

"Who have builded and broken all laws of the Heaven
and Earth, who are free,
Who have lifted the seals from the sunrise, made
pregnant the womb of the sea,
Who have scattered the phantoms of heaven, wrecked
the thrones of the world and their spell,
Who have sown and reaped harvest of flowers in the
fire-waste deserts of hell!

"For my God is the friend that I cherish, and my God
is the woman I love,
My God is the Spring on the hillsides, the Sea and
the marvel thereof,
My God is the justice of sunlight unhindered by
power or pelf,
And vast beyond all and inclusive of all things, my
God is Myself!"

CAIN

Humana ante oculos foede cum vita jaceret
In terris oppressa gravi sub religione
Quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat
Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
Primum . . . homo mortalis tollere contra
Est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,
Quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti
Murmure compressit caelum, sed eo magis acrem
Inritat animi virtutem, effringere ut arta
Naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret.
Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
Processit longe flammantia moenia mundi
Atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque,
Unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri,
Quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique
Quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens.
Quare religio pedibus subiecta vicissim
Opteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo.

LUCR. LIB. I. 62–79.

TO THE

DEATHLESS MEMORY

OF

JESUS OF NAZARETH

SEER AND SAYER

OF TRUTH

WHO WAS BELIEVED ONLY BY THE POOR AND OUT-CAST, WHO WAS RECOGNIZED BY ALL REPUTABLE AND RESPECTABLE PEOPLE AS THE AVOWED ENEMY OF LAW, ORDER AND RELIGION, AND WHO WAS AT LAST BROUGHT TO HIS DEATH BY THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH THROUGH THE OPERATION OF THE ESTABLISHED COURTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE,

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED

WITH MEASURELESS

LOVE.

CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA:

ADAM

EVE

CAIN

ABEL

THE VOICE OF GOD

ACT I

GENESIS

CHAPTER II

16. And the LORD GOD commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17. But of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil* thou shalt not eat of it: *for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

. . . . . .

CHAPTER III

1. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath GOD said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, GOD hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4. And the serpent said unto the woman, *Ye shall not surely die:*

5. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

. . . . . .

22. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: *and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:*

23. Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken.

. . . . . .

CHAPTER IV

1. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

2. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

. . . . . .

A vast, naked plain. Mountains in the remote background. In the foreground a rude tent of skins. The dark twilight of the first flush of dawn. No sound or motion is anywhere in the world.

Time: early spring; the twenty-eighth year since the birth of Cain.

Eve appears at the door of the tent and looks forth toward the sunrise.

EVE

The rapt silence! The dark twilight! — It dawns!
The multitude of the ineffable stars
That lamped the viewless parapets of heaven,
Melt in the light like pearls in golden wine;
The void globe of the calm firmament
Glows; the immemorable ecstasy
Thrills in the vital fabric of creation,
And — hark! — a bird wakes somewhere in the world!
Somewhere a burst seed splits the naked sod,
Somewhere a flower folded at evening
Petal by petal bares its inmost heart
In perfect trust and drinks the dewfall! — Life,
O Life, imperishable and resistless! Life,
Fragile as joy and free as destiny!
O breath of life tender and passionate,

Sweet breath of sap and imminent foliage
Blown thro' the level ether and low light!

From within the tent, the voice of ADAM, talking in his sleep.

The voice of ADAM

Give me the fruit! How fair it is! It seems
As it were a globe of light — give me the fruit!
His eyes are strange and glad and perilous!
Eve, hast thou wondered how his eyes are strange?
Nay then — my soul is strong and I will eat!
Give me the fruit, give me the heritage!
Yea! I will wander in the sky-gardens
And meet with level eyes the vision of God!
Give me the fruit!

EVE

Adam!

The voice of ADAM

— the deed is done!
Silence! Silence! The deathless deed is done!
See how he stares! — His coils are flecked with flame,
His eyes challenge! — O God! what comes to pass?—
A wind of flight stirs in the wings of Peace
And peril haunts the glades of Paradise —

A pause. EVE listens intently.

The voice of ADAM

My soul cowers! — What have I done? — Crouch
low,
Woman, crouch low! Pray God the night will suddenly
Cover us from his ken! Eve! Eve! — His voice,
The voice of God! — Justice, Omnipotent,
Justice! The guilt is alien to my soul —
I say not mine, not mine the sin, Lord God!
The woman tempted me and I did eat!

EVE

O vain repentance!

ADAM

Staggering forth, still unawakened, from the tent.

Eve! — Utterly lost!
His hand has loosed the four relentless winds
Against this delicate toy of His creation,
And lifted out of Chaos the elder night,
And set against the paths to Paradise
Seraphim and the sword of circling flame!
And we — we go beyond! O night and death!
O woman, woman, woman, — where is Eden?

At this point ADAM wakes suddenly. A long pause. Slowly he regains complete consciousness, still shaken and afraid.

The light — the life — Eve!

EVE

Adam —

ADAM

Art thou there?

EVE

Take both my hands,

ADAM

— the dream!

EVE

Ghosts! Ghosts!

ADAM

The dream!

Visions! Visions! — O shield me, take my hands!
Let my face lie against thy breast a while —
I dreamed of Paradise and God — no more,
No more! I am too shaken utterly!
Vague am I, vague and desolate as mist!
My soul suffers — O heart, how sad it is!
Life is too tragic of its memories —
Hold me — I need thy tenderness, I need
Thy calm and pitiful hands to comfort me.

EVE

Be still a little, all will be well I know.

ADAM

Say nothing more, for naught avails me now!
There is no other balm but silence. Mine
Are woes too real for words, too wild for tears.

EVE

See out of heaven how there is shed upon thee
The light of dawn —

ADAM

All other light is lost —
The light of God, the light of happiness! —
O memories, dreams! —

EVE

Vain agonies!

ADAM

Vain joys,
Vain life, vain death, — what is not vain and void?
The soul dries up with fear to think of it!
God knows my dreams are very terrible!
God knows there is no laughter in my life,
And in my slumbers no forgetfulness!

EVE

I say, vain agonies! Life cannot be
Itself a glad or sad thing; grief and joy
Are mere interpretations of the soul,
Brief and changeable gloom or splendour shed
Down the wide ways of Life's eternal sea!
Joy is the temper of heroic minds —

ADAM

Grief is the stern acknowledgment of truth! —
Hadst thou my dreams! — O where is Paradise? —

EVE

Peace, peace, distracted soul! —

ADAM

No more! No more! —
No more the inviolable peace of God,
The tideless seas of bright beatitude
Spread like the aura of His steadfast soul!
No more the innocent communion
With Him whose voice pealed thro' the formless void
Till star by star the infinite creation
Woke like bright echoes on the vacant night!
No more the voice of cherubim that seemed
A pulse of light in the celestial dome!
No more, against the flashing slopes of heaven,
Seraphim poised on pinions blind with gold! —
Eden no more, the perfect glades no more!

EVE

I know full well there can be nevermore
The joy that was — to-morrow and to-day
Cannot be nourished with past happiness,
For past is past. — Not life alone is changed:
We are such men and women as we are,
Not as we were beneath God's tutelage,
When Paradise was a delicate play-garden
Where, in contentment of fair things, we lived
So childish-glad of his beneficence.

Now are we not withholden by God's grace
From all mortality; we know at last
How we are fashioned of the selfsame clay
Whence his creative hands divinely shaped
Behemoth and the bird of paradise.
On the bare uplands of reality
Our feet walk level with the whole of life!
Therefore the tender and impermanent joys,
The warm, frail happiness of mortal things
Are ours at last, our earned inheritance.

ADAM

They are not mine! — I know not what you mean!
I am one man to-day and yesterday:
I am that Adam of God's handiwork
Who, perfect thro' the paths of Paradise,
Walked hand in hand with happiness a while, —
Who now is haunted of shrill memories
And anxious dreams!

EVE

Adam — be resolute!
I too have dreamed, I too have memories
Of joy and violence and tragedy!
Your past is mine, we share to-day. Say this:
What was has never been, there yet can be
No less than is, nor more than is to come;
And life at last, at least is ours!

ADAM

Is life
This desolate sentience, this distressful toil,
This pain, this pitiful treasure of mean days?
Is life indeed this scant monotony
Of being, — this heart of violent agonies
And scared impermanent felicity,
This body of labor and lust and terrible tears,
This brain where everlasting memory beats
Dull as the pulse of a sick artery?
Then were it altogether a happy thing
If this magnificence of stainless light
Were quenched and night were set insuperable
Over this theatre of our desolation
And life so disinherited of delight
Abolished from this perishable dust!
If this be life what lovelier word befits
The clear and innocent ecstasies of Eden,
The candid rapture roused in body and soul
When dawn with lifted, fiery finger-tips
Kindled the dark and dreamless void of sleep,
And once again the vision of Paradise,
The endless melody of shallow waters,
Perfumes of foliage wet with silver light,
The sound of dewfall thro' the fragrant gloom
Of windless forests and the cries of birds
Scattered upon the spiritual silence
Like stars or dewdrops on the twilight — all

The miracle of God's sublime creation
Returned to consciousness!

EVE

Ask me no more!
Ask me no more! — such tears of mine are fallen
On the wild harp of memory that now
The strings are lax and faint, — they sing no more!
Well do I know the past was otherwise
And more — yet also haply something less!
Thought wearies of the eternal task! — at least
The austere and passionate life of liberty —

ADAM

Is strange to God's beneficent intent
And steadfast will!

EVE

Yet is it come to pass! —
The core of truth is darkness to the soul.
I cannot tell — I suffer of such things
As swell beyond the shape of any words.
Only in silence can we bear with fate,
And find the joy to live not pitiably
Nor infidel — lest all were lost in vain!

ADAM

In vain! In vain! — the word rings void as life!
In vain the irremediable woe,

In vain the exile from God's father-house,
In vain the lamentable days and nights
Of terrible remembrance and tense dreams! —
Vain hopes, vain tears, vain agonies!

EVE

Be still!
The dream has robbed thy soul of fortitude,
Swelled thy remorseful heart with futile tears,
And crazed thy brain with vain imaginings.
I know too well the face of thy despair,
Too well! — therefore be still that I may live!
I too have felt the intolerable scorn
And borne the task that seemed unbearable.

ADAM

The scorn of labour and the task of tears,
The scorn of memory and the task of life,
The scorn of hope, the task of patience — Eve,
I wait: — the end is silence. Look beyond!
Death even shall haply ease the exhausted flesh
And pour perpetual oblivion,
Shadow and senseless silence on the soul!

EVE

Shadow and silence and oblivion —
Is death indeed so absolute a term?
Is death a magic of such sovereign cure?

Is death a silence so eventual?
It cannot be! If life must find a term
Vain is the passionate utterance of life,
Vain the sore travail in which my womb conceived
The stalwart children of thy generation!
It cannot be! What tho' the hand of death
Shall smite my mouth with silence utterly
And feed spring flowers of my carrion?
Yet is eternity within me! — Hark!
Whispers, whispers of immortality!
As it were a shell found inland, so is life
Fulfilled with murmurs of an infinite sea!
Soul is the Pilgrim of Eternity,
And Life and Death in long processional
Chequer the pathways of its endless march
Like day and night: a strife and then a sleep,
Darkness and light, a song, a silence — so
They pass: the Pilgrim and the Path endure!
Adam! Adam! — I say thou canst as well
Measure the soul in terms of life and death
As lay a foot-rule to infinity!

ADAM

Be still! Here in the vigour of my days
I search the paths of time with sleepless eyes:
The void prospect of eternity
Glitters with ghosts of lunacy and fear!
My soul shudders! — I find no goal of light,

No guerdon of great deeds nor any hope
Save of the ambushed death that chokes with dust
The wolves of memory at the heels of life!
Death is the almshouse for the wayfarer,
The prize, the goal, the journey's end, the sleep!

EVE

Perchance — perchance — where's truth? the absolute
Is never learned yet faith is justified,
The faith of life that is and is to be.
Soul wanders blindly in a labyrinth,
Grasping for guidance one by one the threads,
Sombre or splendid, that at last combine
To weave the cosmic tapestry of truth.
Perfection lies beyond! — yet momently
Visions dawn, vistas of infinite light
Open — and close, yet leave their afterglow
To guide the wandering of the errant feet
Of the earth-children!

ADAM

Heart, O Heart of passion!
O Heart of tears! — canst thou console thy sorrow
With such vain raptures of imagination,
And make with fevers of a mind diseased
Roseate the unrelenting face of truth?
Thy faith is pitiful!

EVE

Not mine alone! —
I learn my secret from the lips of life:
Words of my gospel are bird-melodies,
Pale lotos ripening in the pond-waters,
The hollow murmur of the winds of spring
Thro' forests soft with imminent foliage,
Rose hyacinth and white anemone
And golden crocus, songs and perfumes shed
Thro' twilight, and the rush of plunging streams,
And sea-storms, and the native, violent lust
Of mating animals; — yea, from all acts of life
Transpire the faith, the measureless love, the clear
Simplicity of all heroic deeds! —
Sing, Spirit Divine! O lips of Life
Thrilled with immortal whispers, heart, O heart
Of Life, sing on! — my soul shall hear thy voice,
Shall sing thy song, O heart of Life! O lips
Of Life! and say — The crown, the prize, the pæan
Dull the magnificence of noble deeds!
Recompense is the measure of mean aims
And small achievements: toil may earn a wage
And strife a slumber, but the act of life,
Like all heroic deeds and spiritual,
Is wrought and tested in eternity!
Its parturitions prove too pure a faith
To ask a goal or seek a prize beyond!

ADAM

Poor Soul! — misery and sin have crazed thy brain!
Life is no other than a senseless lust:
What can the grosser nature signify?
Knowledge is God's alone; by His sole grace
We read the legend of unchanging truth:
Hope in His favour; for the rest, despair!

EVE

Hope in God's favour — hope of Paradise —
Hope of what was, of what no more shall be?

ADAM

— Lost, lost beyond recall!

EVE

— beyond recall!
Therefore not lost in vain! The soul inures
To new desires, new hopes, new powers, new truth!
O hope no more what was or what shall be! —
Lost is God's favour, lost is Paradise,
Lost the desire and hope of what has been,
And lost is even the blackness of despair
Whereof His wrath fulfilled me!

ADAM

Eve —

EVE

I say
We knew despair how dire an agony
It is, that night beneath the starless shroud
Of dark and thunder and whirlwind and shrill cries,
Whereunder earth seemed as a shattered ship
Derelict on the seas of dissolution! —

ADAM

When by his wrath was loosed against creation
The violence of elemental things! —
Woe beyond utterance!

EVE

Hear me! — suddenly
Forth from the pits of palpable blackness sprang
The dawn, and tore apart with hands of flame
Night's cere-cloth on its brows! — delirious,
Terrified, fallen, — free! I glimpsed again
The clear skies fresh and spiritual as song,
The life-beneficent and tender light,
The earth, this earth of graves and growing flowers!
Breathless and dumb, with eyes thirsty of vision,
I saw the impenetrable dome of night,
The walls of dark that seemed immutable,
Flicker to flame, while from their ruins fell
Embers of twilight thro' the storm-tossed airs!
And then, Adam, O then the gates of light —

Then, as I stared — sprang wide within me: Dawn
Broke in my soul! I was ineffably
Glad of unutterable things! — it seemed
Triumph was won, a miracle was wrought,
A deed of love and passionate liberty
Accomplished! Scornful of my night's despair,
Against the deep skies of eternity
The stars of life shone steadfast and the stars
Of faith, — the faith of life! And then, and then —
Sun rose resplendent, witness to the truth!
I knew in that surpassing hour, since day
And dark were faithful in their periods,
That life and death could not be less nor fail
Their full return!

ADAM

Then life's return is pain! —
For all my days are very lamentable,
And all my nights that should be smooth and void
Are fevered with intolerable visions,
And all my dreams of death are dark and dumb,
As of a peril and a mystery.
Yet am I nowise cringed before my woes!
Nay! — tho' my life is bruised with sore affliction
And dire repentance blasts my happiness,
Tho' in remembrance Paradise forever
Blooms with fresh light and flowers ineffable,
Clear pieties and peaceful innocence,

Against the gloom of this grieved sentience
Of violence and starvation, yet I bear,
Scornful of tears, the grief and scorn of life!
Faith is the stern, austere acknowledgment
And dumb obedience to the will of God:
Such faith my soul has kept inviolable!
What tho' He crush me, is He not the Lord!
Therefore my hands have torn the thrifty sod
And lured to fruitfulness the fragile seed.
I serve and wait; but nowise shall my soul
Yield to the lure of perishable joys
Nor scarf the eyes of Truth with gossamer
Of delicate hope, of fond imaginings.
Never within my heart shall cowardice
Whore with imagination to achieve
A false and unsubstantial happiness.

CAIN and ABEL enter unperceived from the tent.

I will be stern and just and absolute:
Thus only can the soul of man preserve
What shreds are left of calm and dignity.
Therefore, Woman, I say forbear thy speech! —
And Thou, O Lord of Life, Magnificent God,
Craftsman of miracles whose labour caused
Mighty establishment of heaven and earth,
Whose hands shaped chaos and tamed rebellious suns
And wrought the hosts of heaven to harmony,
Grooved perilous pitfalls for the unresting seas,

Lifted these naked uplands of the world,
Pillared on high the sapphire dome of heaven
And gave fair ordinance to the wayward hours —
Grant me, O God, to say — "Thy will be done!"
With level lips, obedient to the last!

CAIN

Father! — what say'st thou? Have I heard aright?
Obedient?

EVE

Cain!

ADAM

His will be done!

ABEL

Amen!

EVE

Cain! Cain!

CAIN

His will and mine and thine be done! —
Amen! — 't is well! His will and mine are twain,
Yet each may still be free and absolute.
Is my life less because you live? am I
Weak by your strength, by your hope hopeless? Nay!
A myriad lives cannot diminish me,
A myriad hearts distrain no love from mine, —

My will alone fashions my destinies!
Why say'st thou, then, obedient? — God is God,
And Man is Man. — Why chains when all is free?

ADAM

Thy dark thought stumbles in impiety.
Art thou so blinded from enlightenment?
God rules! knowest thou not His secret laws
Thro' life and death dispose immutably
The minnow and Leviathan, the pale
Glow-worm and Gold Arcturus with his sons?
Child, we are dust, once lifeless, soon to die,
Sentient and lonely creatures of his will
Cast in the mould of his divinity.

CAIN

Father! father! — What say'st thou? — Can it be
That we are creatures of an alien will,
The fashioned puppets of a craftsman's hands,
The structured dolls of God's imagining?
Creatures — How then? — is liberty a lie?
Are we so basely cheated and contemned?
Then are we pitiful spectres of a dream;
Then is this azure overarch of heaven
Lifted on ghostly wings of phantasy;
Then is the day-spring's fire-flushed flood that pours
Up the star-shingled beaches of the sky
A bright delusion; then beneath the sun

Are void phantoms; then is life itself,
This passionate life, this imminent creation,
Mere vapour on the immeasurable heaven
Where dawns the eternal morning of the soul!
Nay! — since we are not men but slaves, and thus
Even the high task and ecstasy of love,
The austere endurance of great wrongs are vain,
And vain all tenderness and sacrifice
That swell the soul's horizons, — then the Soul
Itself is naught — a cause denies the Soul!
O father, seest thou not how much is lost?
How by God's will all fades to nothingness?
What cause is needed why the splendid sun,
The delicate moon and all the faultless stars
Minister to the world delicious light?
What cause is needed why the crusted sod
Gives punctual utterance to so fragile flowers?
What cause is needed why within me stirs
The haughty power and longing of creation,
Or thought or spiritual serenity?
What cause is needed, what is justified?
If cause there be then are we all betrayed,
Then may we well despair of life and death!

ADAM

I hear thy words — madness and blasphemy!
God pity me! — for I thought his justice slept,
His vengeance drowsed, with misery satiated.

I was the more deceived! — The poison works:
Thou art the child of Woman, the son of sin.
Thy crazed words witness: — Eve, thy womb is cursed,
Hark to thy son!

EVE

In a low voice

Mine! Mine!

ADAM

Methinks I hear
That voice that said, "Thou shalt be even as is
Almighty God, knowing both Good and Evil!"

EVE

That voice of passionate poems and grave joys —
Even so —

ADAM

It spake as thou, my eldest son!

CAIN

What have I uttered more or less than truth?
Why are your words so strange, your eyes so sad,
And sudden panic fallen upon your thoughts? —
For love, for justice, simply, as I speak,
Deal with me! Judge me not, tho' ignorance
Cheats my impetuous soul: — are we not all

Like lonely voyagers on uncharted seas
Who signal each to each when thro' the gloom
Flashes a beacon, or a distant roar
Warns where some coast confronts the sombre flood,
Perchance the haven of our guideless quest,
Perchance a peril and a sepulchre?
O you, forbear! — even tho', lost and blind,
I, from the sluggish rear of circumstance,
Signal a rushlight for a guiding star
To you who lead the intrepid van of hope,
Let not your hearts condemn me utterly!
Whatever leagues divide us man from man
Seem in the endless journey of the soul
So brief a distance! Rather, tenderly,
Lead me to stand one day where now you stand,
To glimpse the light that proves me wrong to-day!

ADAM

The light is God! Within the soul there dwells
Reflected splendour! — He, the Sun of Heaven,
Gives light to all. The dream of liberty
Shadows the glass, where God's magnificence
Alone should glow, with darkness utterly.
When, from the sapphire pinnacles of heaven,
Spangled with stars, where sing to pleasure Him
Grave angels and the clear-voiced Sons of Song,
His eyes look forth, we seem as flickering motes
Caught in the stream of his effulgence!

CAIN

Nay!
No height whence the supernal vision falls
Can shrink us to a less reality
Than what we are, being no less than men!

EVE

Spirit of Life! Thrilled Heart! — Nay, words are vain!
The worst shall come inevitably I know.
My heart is keen with direful prophecy —
Cain, Cain, my heart aches of your destinies!
Clasp me, dear son, in both your arms! — O God!
What shall I say?

CAIN

I ask no eminence,
No power, no more than truth! — in very deed
What less thing can a man desire than truth?

EVE

What more thing?

ADAM

Since the truth is God!

CAIN

The truth
Is mine and yours in measure of our will!

ABEL

Yours? — Mine?

CAIN

How not, if there is truth at all?
The ways are barred to no adventurer,
The seas bear up whatever onward keel!

ABEL

Where? To what end? Lacking God's guidance, where
Shall stray such blind and errant enterprise?

CAIN

Haply thro' all sweet vistas and sublime
The ecstatic soul at last goes home to light!

ABEL

But you?

CAIN

I walk level with what I am,
Negligent of a goal. My feet no less
Are stablished where they tread than spreads my soul
Her irised wings and lifts her breast of faith
Against the eternal skies and shoreless seas,
The infinite, fresh, immortal, strange Beyond!
So poised, I may be master of no thing
That is at all and will be slave to none!
If God — you say — assume to tutor me,

How shall He ask a less thing than I crave
In native aspiration? Rather shall He
Lift up his light beyond the utmost stars
Fading along the verge of consciousness!
Rather than bind me in obedience
He shall loose freedom from the parapets
Of heaven and spur my soul to range beyond!
So, haply, after long discoveries,
To walk at last as comrade, hand in hand,
And share with Him the infinite vision of truth!

ADAM

O mortal pride! O madness worse than sin!
Pitiful child! Derisive, trifling worm
God's foot would crush didst thou deserve so much, —
Be silent! lest perchance thy noisy babble
Might vex his calm divinity! —

EVE

Hush! — Hush!
I know the worst must come — nothing avails,
For him my heart foretold catastrophe
When, as I watched last night beside his sleep,
His brows grew bent in great resolve, his lips
Muttered as tho' within his sightless eyes
Sate perilous visions or his soul endured
Strange visitation of fantastic dreams!
Cain! — O my child, I love you utterly!

What urge compels you? What magnificence
Lifts in your life? What sense of combat swells
Your soul with truth, your heart with liberty?

CAIN

How shall I say? — within me all is flowing
And vague and boundless and unutterable.
Within me joy, heart-deep, heart-warm, and love
And power of life are measureless; within
Light beats and swells! — I dwell within the soul's
Rose-irised mist of everlasting wonder
Where life assails me with resistless love!
I share with all — and all results for me!
For me the day-spring and the dawn of moon,
For me the elate, innumerable stars,
For me strong seas, for me this earth of graves —
O earth of tireless conception! — and
For me these plains and desolate mountain-peaks,
This glad and faithful fellowship of life!
These all, all are my passionate lovers! All
They seize my sense, they take their will of me,
They task me with delicious ecstasies!
On towers of naked rock, in deep defiles,
Beneath the glittter of tree-leaves wet with light,
By streams singing their journey thro' the world,
In rainfall, by the roar of distant seas
On beach and cliff, by cloud and cataract,
I feel a presence and a mystery,

A summons of incomparable love,
Great indications of eternity,
Miracles, vistas, portents, lifted veils,
Breathless discoveries and revelations,
The lure of open arms, thro' doors ajar
Glimpses beyond, voices of grave surmise, —
These, all I feel within me and around,
Breathe of immortal secrets! — More, too deep,
Too delicate for words, heaves in my breast,
Burns in my sense and swells my soul with light!

EVE

O God, how all my wounded heart resounds!
Hush, lest I yield! — No more! — No more! — thy words
Are wonderful and strange as happiness!
The gates spring wide asunder! — Hush! No more!
Thy dreams, God knows, were otherwise, — thy dreams
Were gaunt with pride and prophecy and pain!

CAIN

Then were my dreams beyond my conscious scope.
The spread of earth, the circling deeps of heaven,
The interminable sea, resistless love,
The passion and miracle of life and death,
The immortal whispers from within the soul —
My knowledge finds horizon in these things.

ADAM

So far, so pitiably art thou strayed from truth,
Thou blind and boastful fool! learn this at least:
The true horizon of the soul is God!
And thou, Eve, Woman, most perilously wandered
In weak delusion, now I charge thee speak,
Lest thou should'st fall again in deathless sin,
Of God and man, — God's all, man's nothingness!

EVE

Dear son, we are God's creatures every one —

CAIN

Mother!

EVE

I'll speak no more!

ABEL

Haply it is
That God inspires his handiwork and sets
The pulse of life in cadence with his heart.
Haply, dear Cain, the joy, the infinite love,
The fire and perfume of divinity,
The rapture of concealed infinities
Thy soul has garnered round thee and within,
Are but the harvest of his seed of grace
Sown broadcast over all his huge creation.

CAIN

Then am I cheated of my heritage!
Then all's a dream, a web of foolish lies!
Then is the faith that fills the fragile nest
And exquisitely brings frail flowers to bud
A pitiful derision; then is life
A monstrous farce and death a fruitless pang!
Then are my manhood and my liberty,
My will, my thoughts, the life-sap of my loins,
The unborn sons and daughters of my blood
Vain hopes and pitiable deceptions, lies
Of sense and soul, — Aye! then is God himself
The showman of a stupid mummery —

EVE

Cain! — Cain! — forbear!

CAIN

Hast thou forgot thy pangs
That prove this life was thine that now is mine?
Not God's life, thine and mine! — Yea! face to face
And heart to heart, with deep and fearless eyes,
So it is mete that I should speak with God
Who speak with no thing on less perfect terms!
My life, my love, my cherished liberty,
Are mine because whatever is at all
Shares in their dispensation. — I will take
No joy but all participate, no pang

But all endure, no power, no attribute
But all possess or shall possess in turn!
So is my right inviolable to stand
Where now I stand and ask my leave of none!

ADAM

Enough! — O God, be just yet merciful!
Witless he is and sinful — yet my son!
Punish his sin, yet I beseech thee stay
The full and righteous measure of thy wrath!
And thou — answer no more! — I'll hear no more!
Thou art my son, living in God's defiance,
To add a grief more grievous than the rest
To all the misery my harsh days must bear!
And thou, whose weakness set the term to joy,
Thou, by whose sin the worst has come to pass,
Beware of what more dire events may chance!
And now — Go forth each one. The daylight lifts—
Somewhere your labour waits you in the world!

ACT II

GENESIS

CHAPTER IV

. . . . . .

3. And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

4. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. *And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering;*

5. BUT UNTO CAIN AND TO HIS OFFERING HE HAD NOT RESPECT. AND CAIN WAS VERY WROTH, AND HIS COUNTENANCE FELL.

6. AND THE LORD SAID UNTO CAIN, WHY ART THOU WROTH? AND WHY IS THY COUNTENANCE FALLEN?

7. IF THOU DOEST WELL, SHALT THOU NOT BE ACCEPTED? AND IF THOU DOEST NOT WELL, SIN LIETH AT THE DOOR. . . .

8. AND CAIN TALKED WITH ABEL HIS BROTHER: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, THAT CAIN ROSE UP AGAINST ABEL HIS BROTHER, AND SLEW HIM.

A broad level of naked rock at the extreme summit of a high mountain. No vegetation nor any sign of life whatever. At the back the mountain falls away in a sheer precipice. In the immense distance below and beyond stretches a vast panorama of forest, field and stream, warm and tranquil thro' the golden haze of late afternoon. In the foreground is a low platform of stone about twenty feet square with three broad stone steps leading up to it. On the platform stands a sort of sacrificial stone or table of offerings. The splendid light of the low sun inundates the summit of the mountain and lies, windless and warm, across the altar.

Time: late afternoon of the same day which dawned in Act I.

CAIN enters by a path ascending from the valley. He bears in his hands fruit, grain, and two small jars containing oil and wine. He places his burden on the ground near the raised platform, and, seating himself on a boulder, surveys the immense prospect spread beneath him.

CAIN

I am gone sky-ward to the uttermost —
Tacit and distant as life's thought of death
Earth lies beneath me patterned with sheer hills,

Deserts and forest-marches, flashing streams
And sea-scapes vast beyond the power of vision.
Its charted levels, whelmed beneath the dumb
Cycles and tides of lucent sapphire, seem
A sea-floor tufted with gigantic weeds,
Virgin of tumult or the tread and travel
Of restless feet; yet fruitful streams, I know,
Go seaward voiced with endless melody,
Twilight is plaintive with the cries of birds,
Dim forests murmur soft as sleep, and all
The myriads of life are musical!
No whisper lifts, — the light is deep and dumb.
As one sequestered in the tower of thought
I stand aloof from restless strife and sound,
Withdrawn beyond the fellowship of life.
Solitude, silence and tranquillity,
Immensity of elemental things, —
Haply in you at last the soul finds room,
And liberty and light haply in you!
It may be, — aging with the passionate seasons
On earth's maternal breast, — that life becomes
Too much a lyric enterprise, too wrought
With dreams and great desires and deep surmise,
Too dazed with motion and magnificence.
There, in the press and pride and longing of life,
Haply the captive soul is leashed and lulled;
Yet whiles, even in the ruck of the swift hours,
Sentient of twilights and infinities!

But here is refuge: silence, unperturbed,
Broods on these battlements of lifeless stone
Reared like an isle from life's tempestuous sea.
Regioned in light and loneliness, the soul
May, in the all-reflecting glass of truth,
Confront with eyes insatiable of light
The revelations of eternity.
Here might at last divinely be fulfilled
All spiritual indications to the soul
From rapt communion with the silent stars,
That still by night their endless vigil keep
On the vague frontiers of infinity.
Here might the thought of time, the thought of death,
The wonder and desire of deathless things
Yield to the soul their last significance.
Here might the mystery of God be solved!

He pauses, staring before him over the immense prospect where the light deepens.

I know at last all shall be lived, endured —
All shall at last find mansions in the soul;
And then — then shall the soul be satisfied?
O restless voyager, where is thy rest?
Is there a haven for thine enterprise,
A goal for thine adventure and a term
For thine infinity? — Imagination,
Daring the intervals of pathless gloom
From star to star of thought, falls broken-winged!

Yet are the days of life occasional
Of truth's divine discovery, — and soul
Shall at the last accept no less than truth!

A pause. CAIN gazes before him, lost in thought. Then, ascending from below, the voice of Abel is heard singing.

The voice of ABEL

Lord God, my light, my hope, my faith,
  Craftsman of earth and sea and sky,
  What power but Thine can justify
The ways of life, the pangs of death?

Resistless God! before Thy face
  My spirit bows, I feel Thy will!
  My heart is meek — O Lord, fulfil
My life with Thine exhaustless grace!

I put no trust in strength or youth,
  Or power, or thought, or mighty deeds;
  I ask of life no more than needs;
I know but this — Thy will is Truth!

Thy creature needs Thy love and light,
  Thy servant bows before Thy rod;
  O guide my steps, Eternal God,
And make me perfect in Thy sight!

ABEL, bearing in his arms a lamb, enters and appears face to face with CAIN.

CAIN

Abel — Abel —

ABEL

Cain —

CAIN

Abel — alone —
So far —

ABEL

My feet have striven to this sheer height
Led by the luminous spirit of piety;
I bear the innocent firstling of my flocks
Here to God's altar as a thanksgiving
Of all my heart for his beneficence!
My mood perchance is thine: creation stirs
To new conception; earth's reviving green
Moves the meek heart to praise the Lord of Life
With songs and seasonable sacrifice.

CAIN

Thy mood is alien to my thoughts of God
And all my visions of human destiny.
I bring no tribute —

ABEL

Nay! — a eucharist!
Is it not very spacious and most fair
This parcel of God's potent handiwork

Held by the sons of man in heritage?
Is it not generous of all pleasantness
And fruitful for the hunger of life's days?
Then, to the Heavenly Artisan who severed
Darkness from light, shaped systems from the void,
Wafted the breath of life thro' lifeless clay, —
How else to Him can man glance heavenward
Save with mild eyes of adoration? How
Climb to his footstool save in grateful praise?

CAIN

God knows no gratitude of mine shall fail
Where such is due. God knows when face to face
I meet my creditor, no debt he proves
Shall wait for payment. Now, till then, I stand
Fettered by no more than my bounds of thought,
Slave to such fears and passions as obscure
Soul's truth and chill the headlong heart of faith, —
Yet, in conception, strong, supreme, and free!

ABEL

Why has this violence of self, this stern
Defiance diseased thy soul with doubt and pride?
The days of life bring one by one their treasure
Of simple toil and simple happiness —
Desires, right deeds, endurance, joy and pain,
With over all the shelter of God's wise will!
Forego thy search: God is a mystery.

Now, while the last light lingers heavenward,
Let me fulfil my sacrifice: my soul
Lies on God's breast, — my trust is all in Him.

ABEL ascends the steps to the raised platform, still carrying the lamb in his arms. He sets the lamb down and heaps some fuel on the sacrificial stone. Then he stands before it facing the deep light of sunset.

CAIN

to himself as he watches Abel

His face is young and tranquil as a child's:
All seems surpassing well with him, — his eyes
Shine with calm rapture, innocent of thought.
Meek trust, simplicity and tenderness —
I must believe his soul is satisfied, —
Filled with a crust! — and I who starve, who starve!
O tireless voyager! O soul of me!
Captain, my soul! — shall we not better rest?
See, where a mansion in the House of Life
Waits our repentance, and a candle burns
Still thro' the casement — yea, tho' faint and far,
The firelight of contentment lures us back!
Shall we not better pause, return, — forget
Our desperate quest beyond the heedless stars?
Shall we not better live forevermore
Passionless by the threshold, lulled in sleep,
Like children sheltered in the Father-house?

CAIN

ABEL

The golden sandals of reluctant day
Climb the broad shoulders of the heavenward hills.
Earth fills with darkness like a shallow bowl
And sleep weighs down the weary lids of life.
O peace of God, vigil of God's great love,
I feel you now, in vast serenity,
Brood like a benediction on the world!

CAIN

still to himself

No more the ecstasy and the pangs of thought,
No more the tempest's threat, the perilous plunge
And shoreless vision of blind uncharted seas
Where soul must wander years and lives and æons
Seeking the undiscoverable truth!
Captain, my soul, — shall we not better rest?

ABEL strikes fire and lights the fuel upon the altar. He throws on the flames myrrh and frankincense; a dense smoke arises. Then he raises the lamb in his arms and at the same moment draws a knife from his belt.

ABEL

Being whose thoughts are destiny: whose power
Chains the rebellious, tames the passionate;
Whose justice spares the suppliant soul and damns
The soul of pride, — Almighty God, to Thee

Ascend my pæan and prayer and thanksgiving!
Father of Life, accept thy creature; Lord,
Master, receive thy faithful servant Abel!
I ask with contrite heart and will subdued
The dispensation of thy charity!
Suffer this fire and incense may be blessed;
This living sacrifice be sanctified
With thine acceptance!

ABEL cuts the throat of the lamb and lets the warm blood pour out on the sacrificial stone.

I beseech Thee guard
My frailty, fill my heart with thy desire,
Fashion my will to thine intention, take
Temptation from me of my mortal strength,
And pride of thought, — my hope is all in Thee!

ABEL falls on his knees beside the altar and remains lost in rapture. CAIN springs to his feet.

CAIN

Shine! Shine! passionate light of Liberty!
Blow outward winds! lift the wide wings of thought
Reckless and blind against the night! and you,
Monotonous thunder of the shoreless seas,
Sound thro' long vistas to the sleepless soul!
Rouse, heart benumbed, the lethargy is passed!
Spirit dismayed, the spell is shattered, wake!

Athlete of Freedom, rend the silken fetters
That well-nigh bound thy nerveless sinews fast!
O Heart, how near we stooped to infamy!
Now and forever the supreme choice is made,
The die is cast! Never shall I behold,
Turning a backward glance from truth's endeavour,
The firelight of content, the lamp of fear
Flickering behind the clouded panes of thought,
The guarded threshold of the House of Sleep!
Forward I set my steadfast eyes! Haste! haste!
Captain, my soul! we shall return no more!
Cut the last strands of weakness and despair
That bound our vessel to the shores of safety!
I hear the singing of all the spacious seas
Of truth's supreme adventure and at last
Take the deep vistas with a homeless eye!

CAIN advances rapidly, seizes the grain, wine and oil which he had deposited on the ground and mounts the steps to the platform. There he pauses a moment, looking down upon ABEL, who is still on his knees in a sort of quiet ecstasy.

Man! and so abject! yet my heart is love —
So young he seems, so tender like a child!
Abel!

ABEL

Who calls me?

CAIN

Rise! for I am Cain,
First of the Sons of Man!

ABEL

O rouse me not!
God's peace enfolds me —

CAIN

Rise!

ABEL

What is thy will?

ABEL rises to his feet still a little dazed by the rapture of his meditations.

CAIN

Knowest thou me?

ABEL

Why are thine eyes so strange?

CAIN

Knowest thou me?

ABEL

Thou art my brother Cain —

CAIN

First of the sons of man!

ABEL

What is thy will?

CAIN

Abel, as we are men, I love thee!

ABEL

Cain,
As God is Love, I love thee.

CAIN

All my will
Is thy redemption —

ABEL

My redemption?

CAIN

Man!
I will redeem thee from thine abject state,
Strike the vile fetters from thy fearful feet,
And set thee in the path of liberty!

ABEL

Liberty?

CAIN

I have lifted the large light,
Near to destruction; it shall shine as fire
Flashing by night, and there where nothing was

Save darkness where imagined spectres stalked,
Visions of God and man's divinity,
Grown to perfection thro' ascending lives,
Shall smite thy breathless soul with wonder!

ABEL

Cain!

CAIN

Liberty! — See! — God stands before thee now
Real and majestic! Thou shalt understand
How much thy cowardice has wronged him; Man,
Thou hast defiled his name! Thy prayers invoke
Some wrathful demon, not the Soul of Light!
Repent thy prayers, thy prayers were blasphemy!

ABEL

Cain!

CAIN

Hear me —

ABEL

Blasphemy?

CAIN

God is not Lord
Of slaves nor tyrant pleased with abject fears,
Pæans and sacrifice: God sheds his grace

And shares his fellowship for men, not slaves!
Men who are sinewed with sublime resolve,
Whom perfect faith has made insatiable,
Whose eyes pursue, star over star, the last
Outpost of knowledge in the skies of thought!
Pilgrims of pathless lands, whom neither walls
Nor slumber nor the arms of love can hold;
Mariners who depart on shoreless seas
Avid of new horizons in the vast
Unknown! — O men, homeless and lonely men,
For you, for you the fellowship of God!

ABEL

Thine is the blasphemy! Beware! The Lord
Hath said, "Vengeance is mine!"

CAIN

Thy words are wild.
Vengeance? Why vengeance? Shall I dare to fear
The Truth? — O man! are we not torch-bearers?

ABEL

Beware! we are but men and God is God!

CAIN

What then? Divinity is here, not there!
O Soul, God is not otherwise than thou.
And thou art God, O soul, spirit divine!

Words that defile nor body nor soul of me
Defile not God! He is what I shall be,
I am what he has been! Hours, days, years,
Centuries, cycles, æons, — I shall pass
At last to where he waits and longs for me!

CAIN strides to the altar and pours on the failing fire his oil and wine. At once the fire flames brightly and a dense column of smoke mounts straight into the windless air. Then CAIN scatters his grain upon the altar. Meanwhile ABEL, dazed and scared, shrinks farther and farther away toward the steps.

CAIN

To You, Spirit Divine! O Soul of Life,
Denizen of this tenement! O God,
Captain of life's adventure, Self and Soul,
Immortal Master of this mortal house!
To You, for moments of eternity;
To You, for Truth's sublime discoveries;
To You, for revelations still to come,
Visions unseen, unknown infinities, —
To You this invocation and to You
This ecstasy and solemn sacrifice!

CAIN stands, transported with rapture, his face lifted and flushed with the firelight. Suddenly darkness falls, thunder peals, there comes a violent gust of wind, and

the column of smoke from CAIN'S sacrifice is bent and blown straight back in his face. He recoils a step.

The voice of GOD

REJECTED!

ABEL shrieks and stumbles backward down the steps of the platform. At the bottom he falls on his knees and bows his head to the ground.

ABEL

Grace! — Forgiveness! — Mercy! — Mercy!

CAIN

Give me breath! — I am stunned!

The voice of GOD

REJECTED!

ABEL

God! O God!
My God! — be merciful! be merciful!

CAIN

Who cries, "Rejected?"

ABEL

God!

The Voice of GOD

REJECTED!

CAIN

Speak!

Answer! — Who dares reject the soul of Cain?
I am the Son of Man — who dares reject me?

ABEL

Cain — Cain!

CAIN

Who dares reject me?

The Voice of GOD

I am God!

Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?
If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?
And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door!

Immediately the wind falls, the sudden darkness lifts, disclosing ABEL prostrate on the ground at the foot of the steps leading to the platform, and CAIN standing, erect and menacing, by the sacrificial stone. Below, the immense panorama of the earth is covered with the shadows of early night. The fire on the altar is extinguished and the scene is illumined only by the last dark flush of sunset which still lingers on the sum-

mit of the mountain. The deep violet of the skies is spangled with ripe stars. The silence and the stillness are unbroken.

CAIN

God's voice! — Rejected! — Cain, the Son of Man,
Rejected! — Man, rejected and man's soul
Utterly lost from God's acceptance! — Then —
Hope whored with Fancy and begot a — dream!
So was my soul deceived! — Rejected! — Hear me,
Infinite, voiceless, elemental airs,
Pathless, inviolable firmament!
Hear me, ethereal solitudes, untrod
Save by the bare and soundless feet of light!
Hear me, O cosmic fellowship of stars,
Stainless as children's eyes; majestic suns
And far-flung systems of coherent orbs!
Hear me, O sun, creative lord of light!
Hear me, O moon, mistress of chaunting tides!
Hear me, dead snows of desolate mountain-peaks,
Robing the tragic shapes of cliff and crag!
Hear me, resistless sea and fruitful earth,
Theatre of life and death! — O earth and sea
Of graves and resurrections, toil and sleep!
Hear me, O Heart, O passionate Heart of Life!
Hear me, Immortal Heart! And hear me, you,
All in whose veins the pulse of life abounds!
And you, Abel! Abel! — O Son of Man,

Hear me! Hear me! Hear me! — now and forever
I make you witness to this monstrous deed —
God has rejected Cain, the Son of Man!

ABEL

God of stern justice and resistless wrath!

CAIN

Justice? — No justice moves this fierce revenge!

ABEL

God's will is justice! — Desperate rebel, yield!
Hast thou not suffered of all thy sinful pride?
Shall not the power of God constrain thy heart?
Measure thy peril, — be contrite or despair!

CAIN

Never! I will not yield nor yet despair!
Must we despair? — Respond, rejected Soul!
Faith cheated, love deceived, fond hopes betrayed,
By God denied — must we despair? Respond!
Where's justice? — light? — refuge? — Thought reels!
The rod
Strikes fire from flint — beneath the blows of wrath
Fierce doubts and perilous questions leap like sparks,
Flashing within me! Reckless Soul, respond!
Who is the God who dares reject me? Who
Art thou, Spirit Divine?

ABEL

Repent! Repent!
Lest worse befall thee!

CAIN

God rejects me! — Now,
As one who falls in fight and then at dawn
Wakes on the stricken field as life returns
Spent and delirious from the peril of death,
And so, nerved with faint hope, numbers his wounds, —
So I, from fear and dire amazement roused,
Question my peril and count my injuries:
How have I suffered? Where have I suffered? Speak!
Body and soul seem scatheless — life remains —
Where are my wounds? — I feel them not! My strength
Is whole! Where are my wounds? Where are my wounds?
I swear, I swear nothing is lost! — All's well!
Captain, my soul, despair is not for thee!
Thou shalt behold the seals of darkness lift,
Weather the wrathful tempest and at last,
Resolute, onward, headlong, dazed and scarred,
Reel thro' the gates of Truth's enormous dawn!

ABEL

Madman! Beware! — Thy hope is weaved of dreams;

Damnable dreams to cheat the will of God;
Pitiful dreams, proud dreams, fantastic lies!

CAIN

Abel!

ABEL

Repent! — if still repentance serves,
Repent! — the mercy of God is infinite
To all who bring his favoured sacrifice —
A contrite, humble and obedient heart!

CAIN

Truth, not forgiveness, I demand of God,
Justice, not mercy, love, not charity!
I was not fashioned to bewail my sins,
I was not born for safe obedience!
I bring not peace among you but a sword!

ABEL

Cain — for thy life's sake, Cain, repent!

CAIN

No more!
Silence! — Ask me no more! — I feel at last
The breath of light, frail and portentous! — Wake!
It dawns, rejected Soul! — The secret yields!
I have been stunned! And now — Light! — Now, suddenly

Shadows shall fade, veils lift — I shall discover
One of the meanings! — Now — at last, at last,
I understand! — Creation — Paradise —
The immortal fruit — Mother, thy gorgeous deed!
O revelations! O discoveries!
Measureless light at last! The truth at last!
Enlightenment! — All's well! The sacred fire
Of liberty still burns! — Man is redeemed!

ABEL

Lost! Lost! Utterly lost, body and soul!
Accursed! Accursed!

CAIN

Now God's dominion ends!

ABEL

Accursed! Accursed!

CAIN

Now man's abasement ends!
For now the power and wrath and terrour of God
Fade like false phantoms in the light, — the light!
God is dethroned and man resumes the crown,
Regains the sceptre of divinity!

ABEL

Pitiful madman!

CAIN

Peace! — despair and fear
Are ghosts that haunt the night of ignorance;
Dwellers in darkness of the immense unknown;
Phantoms that lurk where thought's horizons blur,
Where the vague shores of knowledge quake to feel
Tumult and thunder of the seas beyond!

ABEL

Merciful God, pity him — he is mad!
Pity and spare him!

CAIN

Peace! — God's power is lost!
The ghastly tyranny of fear no more
Shall bind the spirit of man in servitude!
How can our faith be less than perfect now?
All that awaits us shall be well, as all
That is and has been is surpassing well!
Measure thy scope and grasp thy heritage,
Captain, my Soul! — Perchance not God alone
Shall fade and vanish as the large light expands.
It may be, haply, that at last in thine
Infinite waking life itself shall prove
A passionate dream and death a tranquil sleep!

ABEL

Silence, distracted soul! — Can God condone
When I condemn thee as I must? Thou sayest

Such frantic words of peril and deadly sin
As no conception of my brain can grasp
Nor all my love forgive!

CAIN

O man, rejoice!
Now thou shalt understand — at last, at last,
All shall be clear and steadfast in thy soul.
Purge from thy brain the sickness of strange fears:
My cause is pregnant of new liberties:
Hear me in peace and be my justicer.
How I have thought ineffably of God
And stretched the vistas of all my hopes to him,
God knows and thy remembrance certifies.
Much I believed that Truth's immortal seed,
Lost or unfruitful in the soul of man,
Was, in the spirit of God, by love and light,
Brought to its perfect flower — infinity.
God was to me a star of quenchless rays
Guiding my soul thro' time from life to life,
Training my vision to glimpse eternity!
God was to me the breast where all may weep,
The eyes where all may find the immortal light,
The hand that all may clasp, the heart of hearts,
The spirit of passionate faith and liberty, —
The tenant of the heavenly father-house,
Waiting with arms of welcome wide for all!
Such were my visions, such were my thoughts of God —

Yet God rejects me! See! the monstrous deed
Aches for interpretation. What is God,
God who rejects so pure an ecstasy?
Witness! — the crucial secret must be solved!
Spirit finds answer — thou shalt hear and learn,
Partner in man's inheritance with man.
God who rejects me and betrays my hope;
God who denies me and deceives my faith,
Cheats my desire and scorns my exalted love;
God, who with peace and pleasure and loveliness,
Fashioned the marvellous gardens of Paradise,
Sating man's senses to debauch his soul;
God, whose despair, — when Eve, with sacred thirst,
Gathered and shared the fruit whereof all men
Must eat who seek the soul's enlightenment, —
Drew from his lips the cry: "Behold the man
Is even as God, knowing both good and evil!"
God, who in passion and fear and frenzy smote
Man's disobedience and his dignity;
God, who would hold the heart enslaved with fear,
Stifle the sacred fire with ignorance,
Leash the proud soul with duty and content,
Obedience and remorseful cowardice, —
God is not liberty but law, not love
But mercy, not redemption but despair;
Not joy but lethargy and meek content,
Not grief's robust acknowledgment of wrong
But abject lamentation and remorse,

Not justice but forgiveness or revenge,
Not strength but safety, not the change of growth,
Fluid unrest of free development,
But rules and customs and establishments,
Limits and lies — the servitude of man!
So even is God and God's significance!
But Lo! at last man wakes and stands and strives!
Liberty! — Light! — Thy deed was not in vain,
Mother! Thy womb has not engendered slaves!

ABEL, still on his knees, has listened to CAIN with steadily growing terrour. By this time his fear and amazement, his conviction of Cain's utter lunacy, have become, as it were, a shield which neither the shafts of persuasion nor reason nor truth can penetrate. He is, in a word, panic-stricken. Staring at CAIN, he backs away from him on his knees.

ABEL

almost in a whisper

Blasphemy!

CAIN

By the breast that gave thee suck,
Abel, my brother, I adjure thee rise!
Rise and rejoice! I bring thee liberty;
For truth is liberty and nought but truth!
Never again thy knees shall cringe; thy heart

Never again shall feel the fear of God!
Body and Soul are real and perfect — rise!

ABEL

as before

Blasphemy!

CAIN

Lo! men are we — Gods in germ!
The earth is real, steadfast beneath our feet,
The spacious vision of light is in our eyes,
And over us the dark void is fathomless.
Under the skies' pavilion, gemmed with stars,
On earth's exhaustless breast the flesh can feel
The chill and challenge and mystic hush of dawn,
The careless largess of the luminous days,
The vast of night, the fragrant shadows of sleep,
The task, the triumph, the constant truth of life,
And death's eventual tranquillity!
Yea, even when flesh dissolves in final change
Still may it feel the growth of flowers and still
Serve the insatiable desire of life!
While Soul with passionless and immortal eyes,
Sleepless and strained to glimpse eternity,
Thro' endless time, ascending avatars,
Keeps way and vista to the throne of God
And thence beyond to new infinities!
Finding no goal it shall not reach and pass

And no supremacy it may not share!
Rise! rise! — Ours is the choice, be ours the will!
Body and soul we cannot be denied!

ABEL

as before

So spake the serpent in the golden glades,
So spake the Demon in the ears of Eve —
Blasphemy!

To CAIN

Ask me no more! I'll hear no more!

CAIN

Abel!

ABEL

Be still, lest God should strike thee dumb!

CAIN

Abel!

ABEL

Silence! No more! My heart is sick,
My brain withers! — O God! — Delirious fool,
Dost thou not know that should my soul forget
The fear, the power, the sovereignty of God,
Then would the mercy of God, the might of God
Shelter and guide and comfort me no more?

CAIN

Abel! — art thou so blind, so abject? Man,
Truth is thy guide, thy light is liberty!
What need of shelter where no harm impends?
What need of comfort where no fears assail?
Safety alone is perilous and fear
Only is fearful!

ABEL

So was Eve destroyed!

CAIN

It cannot be thou art so pitiable —
It cannot be!

ABEL

So was perfection lost!

CAIN

It cannot be! — Wake from thy trance! the flood
Of light shall whelm thee suddenly; Truth shall rise,
Strange as a distant land-fall made at dawn,
Pure and transcendent in thy darkened ken!
Where's the disaster, where's the ruinous loss,
The peril thy scared imagination fears?
Speak!

ABEL

Art thou mad? If God's protection fails
Where is security and rest and peace?

Lacking God's grace what more is left for man
Than misery, want, alarm, and loneliness?
Always the outcast from the favour of God
Must feel the agony of a ceaseless dread
Of life and death consume his happiness.
I shudder in the mere thought!

CAIN

It cannot be!
Turn from thy cowardice and childish fears!
For whosoever will save his life shall lose it;
But whosoever shall lose his life for truth
And liberty, the same shall save his life!
What shall it profit thee if thy life is gained
And all the splendour of all the world beside
If soul is lost? What shall it profit thee
To live sheltered in comfort and content,
If thou must yield the soul's inheritance
To alien government and forego thy crown,
Forfeit thy power and pawn thy liberty?
Nothing without can harm or comfort thee;
Peril and joy come only from within!
Thine is the venture! — seek and thou shalt find,
Clasped in the soul's horizons, life and death,
Divinity and power and destiny;
For in thyself superb attainment lies,
Fair in the paths of hope, the range of faith!
Thou art the way, thou art the wayfarer,

Thou art the guide, the goal, the pilgrimage!
Seeking and finding in itself alone,
Thy soul must bear the labour and tears of life,
And feel the passion and gain the glory of love,
And find the eternal thought, the perfect faith,
The courage of truth's unconquerable hope!
All that we know to-day is ours to-day,
And all unknown to-morrow shall be ours!

ABEL

Better that I should leave thee! I can bear
No more! My brain shudders to hear thee speak,
As God shakes in his wrath, knowing thy soul!
Better that I should leave thee — veil on veil,
Darkness is fallen between us utterly:
Now are we strangers who were joined in love!
Better that I should leave thee! — Go thy ways;
Gather the harvest that thy sins have sown!
I can endure no more!

CAIN

A heart so tame,
A brain so chilled with fear, such vile disgrace,
Sorts with the bastard of a soulless slave,
Not with an offspring from the womb of Eve!
O man! — Abel!

ABEL

I'll hear no more —

He turns away.

CAIN

The truth
Shines like a watch-fire and thou wilt not see;
Sounds like a clarion and thou wilt not hear!
Why art thou deaf and blind?

ABEL

I'll stay no more!

He takes a step as tho' to depart.

CAIN

What, must I teach at last these lips of mine
Kissed by thy lips so oft, to call thee slave,
Coward and traitor? — Child of Eve's rebellion,
Abel, art thou a man?

ABEL

turning upon him fiercely

A man I am,
Of God's creation and the child of God!
Much have I heard thy madness rave and rant,
Long have I borne thy blasphemies, — but now,
Better that I should leave thee!

He turns resolutely to depart.

CAIN

Abel! Abel!
Abel! — Thou wearest the semblance of a man, —

The speech, the form, the function! — Leave me?
Thou?
Knowest thou me? — I am thy brother, Cain!
How canst thou leave me? — Paradise was lost
That we might live and reap the harvest of life!
How canst thou leave me while the selfsame blood
Throbs in our hearts and thrills our limbs with strength?
Are we not men together, you and I?
Are we not men?

ABEL

As God is God! — Farewell!

Again ABEL takes a step to depart.

CAIN

Abel!

ABEL pursues his way without turning or answering CAIN'S desperate cry.

CAIN

Must I believe? In bitter truth
Art thou so vile, so abject? — Then, farewell!
Leave me! my heart is sick to know thy shame!
Leave me! — my soul abhors thine infamy!
Leave me!

CAIN covers his face with his hands.

ABEL

Farewell!

ABEL moves away. CAIN takes his hands from his eyes and stands, stirless, watching him depart. His face is haggard.

CAIN

Weep, for a soul is lost!
Weep, for a heart betrays its human trust!
Weep, for a traitor's shame! The Son of Man,
Who, in the days to come, shall haply be
Himself a Father of Men, has turned from truth!

Suddenly CAIN'S face changes as a new thought takes possession of him.

Himself a father — then —

CAIN, transfigured, overwhelmed by his thought, leaps forward and seizes ABEL violently by the arm.

Thou canst not go!
Thou canst not go! Thy soul must see the truth —
Or —

His speech stops suddenly. His eyes stare as tho' confronting a dreadful prospect.

ABEL

Cain! — Release me!

CAIN

Nay, thou canst not go!
This hour is more momentous than I dreamed!
Man, I forgot that not thy paltry fate
Nor mine alone must find decision now!
Man, what of thy children, what of them?
Thou shalt be sire of daughters and strong sons,
Passionate men and women! — Abel! Abel!
Turn to the ways of light lest they shall be
Beggared of all but servitude and shame!

ABEL

Madman! Release me! — Let me pass!

CAIN

Be still,
Coward, be still! The scales of judgment bear
A freight more precious than all thy dreams have guessed!
Fool! dost thou think that were 't thyself alone
Standing in jeopardy, I should not now
Watch thy desertion in a silent scorn,
Choked with the horrour of thy great cowardice?
Yea, and how gladly! were my heart assured,
Losing thee, to forget my love for thee!
Man, how I loved thee! — but no more of this —
Heart breaks, yet life constrains our service still,
And mine is still to say — Thou canst not go!

ABEL

If reason is still existent in thy brain,
Give me the cause of this extremity!

CAIN

The cause is grave beyond thy power of thought
And holds dominion both for thee and me,
Who share the selfsame trust and equally
Safeguard the sacred heritage of life.
We are not merely men but more than men
Since we are pregnant of futurity.
We are not measured by the fretful years
That span our being, since we store the seed
Of myriad generations yet unborn.
We are the start of young humanities!
We are the spring and freshet of mighty streams,
That thro' the reach of the unending years,
As thro' vast fields where darkness wars with dawn,
Shall keep their fruitful and resistless way!
We have within us such an utterance
As once proclaimed shall peal forevermore,
Echoed and multiplied from age to age,
Down thro' the endless labyrinth of time!
We are the scabbard of a sword of flame,
We are the wardens of the House of Life,
We are the guardians of a sacred fire,
We are the gates of Dawn, — the First of Men!
Such is the cause! — for this we shall not yield

The torch of freedom to the winds of fear,
Nor blight the burgeon from the seed of truth
With frost of lies or dust of ignorance!
Nay, we must shield the torch and guard the flower;
We must be perfect in our sacred trust;
We must preserve, in strength and faith and love,
Our whole inheritance that all may share!
Not for the safety of a mean content,
Not in the terrour of a wrathful God,
Shall we renounce the treasure and the task,
Or sell the birthright of the Sons of Man!

ABEL

Thy cause compels not me! I know full well
There shall be shelter upon the breast of God
Thro' all of time, for all the Sons of Men
Who live obedient to His perfect will!

CAIN

There shall be chains for slaves and whips for curs, —
But we! — Are we not men? — express and whole
In all the power and faculty of being?
Are we not deathless souls?

ABEL

Release me!

CAIN

Never!

Never shall I release thee till my hand

Shatters the shuttered windows of thy soul,
And shows thee, tawdry in the great light of truth,
This tinsel majesty, this powerless ghost,
This mouthing masque thy fears have hailed as God!

ABEL

Devil! — Release me!

CAIN

Abel —

ABEL

No, by Heaven,
I will not pander to thy lunacy!

CAIN

Abel, compel me not! I am a man
Driven by desperate emergencies!
Never, I swear, shalt thou betray thy trust!
Nay, thou must here fulfil thy sacred charge,
Shatter thy bondage, cleanse thy soul of lies,
Nor evermore, diseased with cowardice,
Go forth to life!

CAIN is suddenly silent. His eyes are caught by the knife which ABEL had used to sacrifice the lamb and which now lies on the platform where he let it fall. CAIN stares at it in a kind of horrible fascination. ABEL, startled by the sudden break in CAIN'S speech, glances up at his face and then follows his eyes. ABEL sees the knife; he sees CAIN'S expres-

sion. At once his face is transfigured with terrour. Silently and desperately he struggles to escape. CAIN holds him without removing his eyes from the knife.

ABEL

O God, protect me! God,
My God, protect me! O my God!

CAIN

Be still!

He turns to ABEL and cries out in a terrible voice.

ABEL!

ABEL

O God!

CAIN

as before

ABEL!

ABEL

Merciful God,
As I have served Thee in humility,
Guard and protect me!

CAIN

as before

ABEL!

Changing to a tone of desperate entreaty.

Not for thee,
For me 't is fit to make beseeching prayers!

Pity me! Spare me! Man, be true to men!
Spare me this deed! — Spare me! — I cannot choose!

ABEL

Save me, Almighty God! Transcendent God,
Save me, thy servant, Abel!

CAIN

Must it be?
O generations of my seed unborn,
Children of my conception, Sons of Man!
Now for your sakes I tear my heart in twain,
Ravage the confines of my life and hurl
Down from my shattered heavens the light of joy!
Yours is this sacrifice, — for you, for you,
For your salvation, for the Soul of Man!
Abel — I love thee with a perfect love!

ABEL

Devil! Release me! — O my God! My God!

CAIN

So young he is! — So young! — O bleeding heart!
Man can do nothing more for man than this!

He puts forth his hand swiftly and grasps the knife. He shudders.

How can I do this deed?

CAIN

ABEL

Almighty God,
Thy slave implores thee! — Save me! Save me!

CAIN drives the knife deep into ABEL'S heart.

CAIN!

The knife drops from CAIN'S hand. He stares at the body of ABEL. His face is haggard.

CAIN

He is dead!
I have killed the man I loved, my brother, Abel!

Instantly the scene is plunged in total darkness. A tremendous storm rages. Thro' the thunder of the elements is heard the voice of GOD, pealing like a bell.

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?
Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?
Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?

A flash of lightning reveals CAIN still standing on the platform with ABEL'S body in his arms, heedless of the elements.

ACT III

GENESIS

CHAPTER IV

9. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10. And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11. *And now art thou cursed from the earth,* which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; *a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*

13. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14. *Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid;* AND I SHALL BE A FUGITIVE AND A VAGABOND IN THE EARTH; AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT EVERY ONE THAT FINDETH ME SHALL SLAY ME.

15. And the LORD said unto him, THEREFORE WHOSOEVER SLAYETH CAIN, VENGEANCE SHALL BE

TAKEN ON HIM SEVENFOLD. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

. . . . . .

25. And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For GOD, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew.

The same scene as in Act I.

Night: a few hours after the close of Act II. The sky is overcast. In the distance are heard from time to time rumours of storm.

EVE appears at the door of the tent. She pauses, listening intently.

EVE

Silence. — High in the sunless, starless, changeless,
Infinite void and naked visions of sleep,
Treble and clear as chimes, a far voice called:
"Bereavement!"

Again she listens intently.

Silence. — The hours with noiseless feet,
Vacant and solitary and passionless,
Have found me vigilant of the voiceless night.
My heart has heard the heart of silence beat;
Mine eyes have stared into the dense, dead, dark,
Desolate visions of calamity
And glimpsed the lurking demon of despair,
While in my veins the violent life-blood beat
Like muffled thunder!

Again she listens.

Silence — and no light —

Nothing — O Lord, how long? — Where are my sons?
Where are my children? — Abel! — Cain! — My sons!

Again she listens.

Silence — My heart will break! My heart will break!

The voice of CAIN
from without

Mother!

EVE

At last!

The voice of CAIN

Mother!

EVE

The voice of Cain!
Cain! Is it thou?

CAIN
entering

Mother!

CAIN is wild and tragic. EVE stares at him, startled and anxious.

EVE

What ails thee, child?
Speak, dear one, speak!

CAIN

Mother!

EVE

My darling, come!
Lie on my breast — I love thee, love thee — Come!
Weep if thou must — the tears will ease thy pain.
Come to me, come!

CAIN remains stirless, silent, haggard.

Cain! — Child — What ails thee? — Speak!
Thy face is scared and tragic as my heart —
Why art thou strange? What is thy message?
Speak!
If irremediable calamity
Smites me once more, if fate is pitiless,
Still let me know the worst! — it can be never
More dire an agony than this suspense!

CAIN

Mother!

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?

EVE starts back, panic-stricken. CAIN remains as before.

EVE

His voice! — His voice! — Gardens of Paradise!
Midnight of desolation! — Wild despair!

Dear God, I thought forgetfulness was earned!
But now the mountain, builded from the dust
Of all the lonely and lamentable years,
Quakes, and the crater's mouth so long time dumb
That flowers had rooted in the thrifty sod,
Flashes with fire from the volcanic past!
Now by His voice, the voice of God, the shroud,
Weaved by the patient hands of Time, is rent;
The stone is shattered on the sepulchre,
And Death, gaunt Captain of a tragic host,
Marshals his legions on the fields of thought!
His voice — O Cain, hearest thou the voice of God?

CAIN

Mother —

EVE

His voice! — What new catastrophe
Impends?

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?

EVE

Abel?

CAIN

Mother —

EVE

Cain!

CAIN

Hear me! Hear me!

EVE

Cain!

Where is thy brother Abel? — Abel! — Abel!
Why art thou here alone?

The voice of GOD

What hast thou done?

CAIN

Mother — it must be thou shalt understand!
Mother!

EVE

Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN

Dead!

The voice of GOD

The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground!

EVE

Dead? — Cain! Your eyes! Answer me face to face!
Abel is dead? — My child is dead? — and you —
Why are you here alone? — Answer me! — Cain,
Put both your arms about me pitifully:

Mine is the very life thro' all your veins;
Body and soul were sacrificed, great woes
And dire travail endured that you might live!
Close me within your strong embrace, your breast
Here on my breast that bled to nourish you,
And tell me — Cain, my first-born and most loved —
He is not dead?

CAIN

Mother!

EVE

It cannot be!

Abel! Abel! Abel!

CAIN

His ears are deaf,
His eyes are blind. Thy heart and mine may break,
He shall not care: — the man is dead.

EVE

No! No!

God pity me! God pity me!

CAIN

His soul
Failed in the test of truth; he could not bear
The burden and the power of life — and now,
Now is he lapsed into oblivion.

EVE

O son! — Abel! — My child!

CAIN

My heart will break!

EVE

Abel, most young and loveliest child of earth,
Last and most tender of the sons of man,
Mine was thy life, thy death must now be mine!
Come to me, Death, divine and silent Death!
Shed from thy noiseless wings eternal sleep,
Pour thine elixir thro' the veins of life,
Spirit of Death, resistless, secret Death!
Since thou hast laid thy finger on his lips
Who was my child, thou canst not leave me here
Telltale of life's disaster, starved of hope,
Curious of nothing in the days to come!
Change in thine alchemy the days of life
To thine eternity, the fever of life
To thy tranquillity, the memories
Of life at last to thy forgetfulness!
Since thou hast plucked the flower and bruised the bud,
Wither the stalk, uproot the parent stem,
Scatter thine ashes, blight the wasted sod!
Let me not linger with my broken heart
To watch with visionless and tearless eyes

The desolation of my destiny!
Nay, let me perish since my child is dead —
I can endure no more!

CAIN

Thou canst not die!
Not alms but wages life demands of death.
Life must be suffered for the sake of life.
And then — Mother! thy sons were twain, — O Heart,
Wilt thou abandon me?

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain!
Now art thou cursed from the earth,
Which hath opened her mouth
To receive thy brother's blood
From thy hand!

EVE

Silence! I say — Silence! — His voice has lied!
God's voice has lied! But soul is steadfast — Cain!
So vile a slander fails its damned intent:
Not by thy hand! Not by thy hand! — Speak!
Speak!
Speak to me!

A brief, tense interval of silence.

The voice of GOD

Cain! Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN

in violent outbreak

Am I my brother's keeper? Nay, by Heaven!
I am the keeper of the gates of life;
I guard the treasure of all humanity:
Mine, mine is life's inevitable trust,
Mine is the sacred heritage of man!
Are not the generations stored within me?
Shall not the harvest yield as I shall sow?
Is not the trust my life was made to keep
Vexed by the hand that mars the perfect seed
Or robs their birthright from the sons of man?
How shall I suffer that such a traitor live
When by his life the future world is doomed
To stumble in the shadow of ignorance
Stung by the lash of self-inflicted fears?
Shall I not rather with violence even and death
Safeguard the treasure in jeopardy and keep
Flawless the sacred seed? What less than all
His just inheritance of power and light
And liberty can man bequeath to man?
Mother — when Abel sought to pawn the treasure,
Pollute the seed, debase the soul of man —
What could I do but strike the traitor down?

EVE

Silence! Silence!

CAIN

Heart breaks but soul is free!

EVE

Heart breaks!

CAIN

I loved him — yet he might not live!

EVE

shrinking suddenly from him

Murderer!

CAIN

Hear me —

EVE

Murderer!

CAIN

Be still!
By God rejected, cursed and shunned by man,
My heart took refuge in the thought of thee!
Wilt thou desert me? — I am Cain, thy son:
Thine by the very deed thy heart abhors!
Soul of thy soul, flesh of thy flesh I am!

EVE

Thou liest! My son is dead!

CAIN

I am thy son!

EVE

I know thee not! — Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN

He is where all is dumb, deserted, dead;
He lies alone, cold on the mountain's peak;
His shroud is moonlight; round his lofty bed
Great planets veer from verge to verge of heaven,
Like ships of light cleaving a shoreless sea;
The universal multitude of stars
Stare in his sightless eyes; beside his corpse
My broken heart, my whole life's happiness,
Lie in the still companionship of death!
O I have slain him to my misery!

EVE

To thy damnation hast thou slain a man!

CAIN

For man's salvation have I slain a man!
And now, now as thou art my justicer,
Now as my soul lies bare at thy command,
Now shalt thou answer, serving truth in turn:
Tell me where's Eden? where is Paradise?
Where is the loveliness that pleasured thee?
Where is God's grace that filled thy delicate days
With ripe contentment and surpassing peace?
Where are the candid and beneficent joys?
Where is the primal innocence of man?

EVE

I will not speak!

CAIN

My cause demands —

EVE

No more!

Ask me no more!

CAIN

At last light breaks within you!

EVE

Silence! Thy words are senseless to my soul.
Paradise? — Eden? — they are lost, God knows!
Lost beyond hope — I know not whither nor where.
Pure and serene as starlight was my being,
Till time and truth, parents of tragedy,
Scrawled on the tablets of my virgin heart,
As scrawls a stylus on a stainless scroll,
The passionate chronicle of life and death.
Clear were mine eyes and questionless as flowers
Till the flame-flashing sword of Cherubim
Blinded my vision to all God's glory and grace.
My lips were flushed with laughter and soul slept,
Careless of destiny: — but now mine eyes
Are deep with dreams, desires and lamentation;
Still on my lips beneath the taste of tears

Lingers the fruit's immortal savour; still
Soul thrills with revelation! — Sense and soul
Live and remember — how can God forget?
And unforgetful how can God forgive,
Or teach my feet the paths to Paradise?
Eden is lost, the light of grace is quenched,
Gone is the primal innocence of man!

CAIN

Gone — gone — shuddering, fading, lost, lost, lost:
How deep a burial are the seas of time!
All that lived once immediate to our souls,
All that our lives were governed and pleasured with,
Pass and when memory stares with doubtful eyes
Well-nigh her scroll is vacant of their names.
Eden is gone — remembrance knows not where;
Yet, by its loss, was man's existence changed,
Man's soul transformed: thy hand that grasped the
fruit,
Why was it so supremely hazardous?
What hope compelled thy venture on the seas,
The sullen shattered waters of God's wrath?

EVE

I served life — life compelled me — life was born,
Born of my deed, and life's creative pangs
Lifted my heart, where love leaped like a flame,
Beyond the bare desire of happiness.

Ask me no more the wherefore of my deeds,
Ask me no more! — When first my brain conceived
Rebellion, and my heart careless of peril
Felt the ineffable longing of liberty,
How could I then withhold my impassioned hand,
Measure my hopes with vile arithmetic
Or count the hazard of my enterprise?
My compass veered, seeking the pole of truth;
Wind smoothed and swelled my lean and wrinkled sails;
My hawser snapped: — headlong I took the seas!
When suddenly life demanded utterance
Was not the destiny of life within me
To make or mar? — Dear God, I could not choose!
I turned from God, imminent of my sons,
And like a priestess at the altar of life
Offered the irrevocable sacrifice
And grasped the ripe inheritance of man!

CAIN

Mother of men!

EVE

Vain beauty of Paradise,
Barren desire and search of happiness,
Well-nigh of your remembrance is my heart
Vacant and vain repentance moves not me.
There was a woman innocent in Eden,

Glad of her childish laughter and fragile joys,
Scatheless of passionate rapture, — she is dead. —
Is dead, and her repentant heart no more
Beats in a breast bruised with the lips of children. —
The freed slave weeps not for his manacles
Nor can a mother's heart repent her sons.

CAIN

At last, Spirit of Life, maternal Heart!
At last still steadfast, still unconquerable,
Still undismayed I find you tho' despair
Cover you with impenetrable shadow!
Mother of Men, Cain is your very son!
Your words furnish my deed's apology
And plead the justice of my fratricide.
My heart leaps to your welcome, all my heart!
Mother!

EVE

Be still! I know not what you mean.
I know but this — Abel, Abel is dead:
Dead by the murder of your pitiless hands!
Blood-guilt and madness have depraved your sense!
Yet was he very gentle and a child —
Why hast thou killed him?

CAIN

When my brain conceived
Rebellion, and my heart careless of peril

Felt the ineffable longing of liberty,
How could I then withhold my impassioned hand?

EVE

Why must you turn my words to shameful jest?
Why in sheer insult must you mock my grief?

CAIN

You wrong my soul! Mother, what is within me
Seeking translation from my thought to yours
Puts in my mouth what words will serve its end.
O I am too tragic of all my thoughts and deeds
Too strained past life's endurance of despair,
Had I the will, to mock your misery!
Hear me and let the sword your justice draws
Hang on the thread of my relation. — I
Share your catastrophe —

EVE

Say on — God knows
It matters nothing since my son is dead.

CAIN

Dead! — and my love was only less than yours!
Enough! — there has been too much said of sorrow.
Hear me: my tale shall witness what I am.
Alone with Abel in the splendour of evening
I stood exalted on the mountain's crest,

Far in the firmamental solitudes.
We saw together the earth, how fair it was,
Charted beneath us, and the globe of heaven
Poised in august serenity and stained
With sapphire, saffron, and vermilion.
Heart leaped with wonder! Then was Abel moved,
Staining with blood the stone of sacrifice,
To fawn on God with such base flatteries
As might a slave cringed at his master's feet!
Shame scourged my soul — I poured the lustral oil,
Spilled the new wine, scattered the tender grain,
And sought, mindful of human dignity,
God's fellowship that God may share with man.
And then — then — then — God's voice rejected me!
Canst thou believe? God's voice rejected me!
Even then, then as heart swelled with nameless love,
Then as within me a so stainless hope,
A faith so perfect filled my being with light,
Then as from man to God my soul aspired
With power and incommensurable peace, —
Then, then God's voice rejected me! My soul
Shuddered like to a ship that strikes and drowns;
I was dumb; night whelmed me; the world reeled with
storm;
Chaos was in my brain, and fierce despair
Stunned my conception. — Then as one who feels
The shapes of nightmare fade in the first light,
I felt the ghosts of fear and weak despair

Fade in the breath of a stupendous dawn!
For in the passion of my peril I sought
And found at last who God is, what I am.
As daybreak lifted ever a larger light,
Then all the pageant of the past unrolled:
And I beheld, grave with immortal meaning,
Clear in the unconquerable van of thought,
The dire, dim legend of man's innocence,
The secret of all God's jealous tyranny,
The tree which God's commandment strove to keep
Inviolate — all the marvel and might of knowledge,
The power of life, the glory of rebellion,
The fire and love of liberty, the pride
Of freedom, poverty, solitude, and pain:
All the delight and all the tragedy
And all the burden of manhood — and the soul
Won at so huge a cost from Paradise!
Shining in the white light of revelation
The past stood in my vision and within me
The present hour of life flashed like a flame;
And far, far in the unfathomable, far beyond
To-day or the dumb æons of yesterday,
I saw the vistas of To-morrow fill
With life asking its just inheritance!
Mother! — so once for thee magnificently
The vision dawned: so even for me it dawned!
And I, nobly resolved in equal trust,
Master of man's prodigious destinies,

Eloquent of august expectancies,
Elate desires, faith ineludible, —
I turned to Abel, brimmed the bowl of love
Deep with new wine of light and gave his soul
The lustral cup, the great communion!
I cried, "Share with me all the treasure and task!"

A brief pause of intense silence.

Mother!

EVE

No! — No!

CAIN

As God rejected me,
Abel rejected me. I was alone!

EVE

Alone —

CAIN

Outlawed from man's love and God's mercy, —
Yet for the sake of man! — for Abel chose
To take the hire and bondage and forego
The inherent spiritual arbitrament
Of manhood for the sins and deeds of life.
Standing against me by the throne of Heaven,
He chose to forfeit all the lustre of living,
And thus, beggared of human quality,
Barren of sin or virtue, void of truth,
Scared at the flashing fire of liberty,

To seek contentment at the feet of God.
And then, then, as he cursed me turned and fled, —
Suddenly as the sea-wind lifts at dawn
And shakes the constellated canopy
Of heaven and murmurs wandering thro' the silence, —
As thou, hesitant ere thy young lips crushed the fruit,
I felt the destiny of man within us
To make or mar — in him — in me — in man!
I called, beseeched him — he was stunned with fear
Of God's revenge; he cowered, turned, and fled!
And then, just as the all-reviving sun,
Even as one who guards a sanctuary,
I struck the traitor down! — He might not live
To breed a sickness in humanity
And bring pollution to the springs of life.

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain!
Now art thou cursed from the earth,
Which hath opened her mouth
To receive thy brother's blood
From thy hand!

There follows a pause of great silence. CAIN looks at EVE with eyes of anxious expectancy.

CAIN

Abel is dead — God speaks — and thou art silent:
My punishment is greater than I can bear!

CAIN

EVE

the words breaking from her like a cry of pain

My son! — My child!

CAIN

Mother!

EVE

O Cain, Cain, Cain!
Dear God, can life suffer such monstrous things
Nor die delirious of its agonies!
This is worst, to understand thee as I do,
To love thee living and Abel dead, — and all,
All by thy perfect and implacable deed!
O God! love is a bitter catastrophe!
To understand thee as I do! — Behold,
My feet pash in his blood to come to thee!
I reach scared hands across his corpse to grasp
Thy nervous fingers stained with fratricide,
And drowned in the dark tears I weep for him
Mine eyes appeal, my voice beseeches thee!
Come to me, Child, thou who hast slain my child!
Tragic Adventurer, come home to me!
Come — come — I crave thee with my sorrow's strength:
Here are my arms, here is my breast — I love thee!
Light burns my brain — I understand — I know —
Child, thou hast torn the veils and pitilessly

Shown me the inhuman, flawless face of truth.
At last I know Life is indomitable,
Ruthless because resistless; yea, and feel
The irreparable necessity of death, —
Tho' Abel lies lifeless beneath the stars!
Come home to me, — thy tears shall blend with mine.
Weep! Weep! so pitiable is man's destiny!
For now, since I have utterly harvested
The whole heavy inheritance of sin
And sucked the apple of Eden to the core,
Now is my knowledge more than I can bear!
Bankrupt to pay the dreadful price of truth,
I must default all lesser debts of life.
O I am broken-souled and solitary!
Strong Son of Man, come home, I need thy love!
Let us together, voiceless of our woes,
Weld heart to broken heart, spirit to spirit,
Since not alone can heart or soul endure
The inveteracy of life and death and truth!

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain!
When thou tillest the ground,
It shall not henceforth yield to thee her strength;
A fugitive and a vagabond
Shalt thou be in the earth!

A pause. Then suddenly,

EVE

in a terrible voice

Childless!

CAIN

heedless of her cry; to himself:

Destiny! Yea! His voice proclaims
What must be so, the sheer inevitable,
My deed's fulfilment since the choice is made.
I must desire my life lived otherwise
To ask new destinies for the man I am.
No — No — the price is just: — I choose to pay!
For past and future I will be forever
A fugitive from fear's safe prison-house,
A vagabond of truth's confineless realm,
A homeless pilgrim of the Great Idea!

EVE

Childless! — O God, pity me! God pity me!

CAIN

Hush! God is powerless and His violent hands
Vacant of mercy or vengeance or dominion.
Knowledge is freedom: and for this last truth
My life has paid with bloodshed and bitter sorrow.
Believe! Beseech not! for the threads of fate
Escape the violence of God's sheer caprice,
And on the warp of nature's tapestry
Subtly devise the pattern of men's lives.

God is like one who by the wayside stands
And points to each the inevitable way
That leads him where his will has fixed the goal;
Or like a herald on the battlements,
Vigilant of the stars processional,
Who, when the Virgin and the Huntsman stand
Midmost upon their stately journey, calls
"Midnight!" — and all the sleeping City of Life
Murmurs, "His word has fixed the vagrant stars
And brought to sequence and establishment
The mutable multitude of the errant hours!"
And even as such a one is powerless,
Stretching his debile hands, to leash the Bear,
Tether the Lion, bind the Pleiades,
Or change the gradual periods of Time,
So God is powerless to enact his will,
But, watchful from the tower of thought, proclaims
The imminent and inexorable truth.
Voiced like the thunder, like the thunder he
Hurls not the lightning but proclaims its fall.
He is the creature of our cowardice,
The name by which we conjure, when at last
Suddenly revelation racks the soul
With prescience of the inexorable truth.
I am the Lord of Life, who find my path, —
Haply in twilight — yet the day spring flows!
Each shall pronounce and bear his doom save God;
For, tho' our fears conceive him, he is not.

Life shall transpire in his despite and death
Minister to the weary wayfarer:
The flower shall not be wasted from its bloom
Nor winter yield in the creative sod
At his command but as their Nature wills.

EVE

Hush — Hush — It matters nothing. — Abel is dead;
Thou shalt depart — and leave me childless, childless!

CAIN

Mother, it must be as the soul demands:
Justice shall not refrain nor truth relent:
What is shall be endured. For life's sole sake
Wast thou creative. Ask no more of life
Than life, for life has nothing more to give —
No alms for misery, no wage for toil —
And nothing less in all the days to come.
Beauty and happiness are casual gifts,
Superfluous splendour of the spendthrift days,
Pearls that adorn the sombre robes of life,
Gathered at random on the shores of time.
The fruit is of thy labour and pain and peril,
Yet life that sows shall reap the harvest. So,
So and forever we sorrow and serve till life
Breaks like a lute-string drawn beyond its strength.
What is the love that made thee mother of men
But life's imperishable desire for life,

The mounting sap, the elemental lust,
Blent in thy heart's alembic with the light
Of lovelier and still human ecstasies?
O Heart, what more or less is love than this?

EVE

Ask me no more! My brain is dying, my heart
Is dying, my body is dying of life's wounds!
Ask me no more — God pity me! God pity me!

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain!
A fugitive and a vagabond
Shalt thou be in the earth!

EVE

Childless!

CAIN

Nor God, nor life shall pity thee;
But truth shall show thee by what light we live
When all is lost.

EVE

I know for you the light
Shall lift and revelations wake for you.
Yours shall be all the great and lonely joys,
The ecstasy of the imperishable thought
And breathless visions of truth's impartial fire
Dawning on vast horizons of the soul!

Your days shall be ascending avatars;
You shall transcend the realms of time's control,
And pass entire to that eternity
Glimpsed by the soul's astronomers whose eyes
Catch the brief spendour as the fragments flash
Like meteors thro' the stagnant night of life!
But I, I who am Eve and mother of men,
Robbed by the hands of death and by God's hands—
What is prepared for me? Behold me, Cain:
My life is naked, no magnificence
Shall lift the darkness from my haunted eyes!
Cain, I am childless!

CAIN

Yet creative still!
Still shalt thou suffer and weary for thy children,
Tho' truth it is Abel shall come no more
At nightfall, tenderly, to comfort thee,
And truth it is that in the populous earth
I shall be fugitive and vagabond,
Hid from God's face and from the face of man;
And truth it is that for the sole truth's sake
All men who find and know me as I am
Shall rise and slay me in a frenzied fear.

The voice of GOD

Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain,
Vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold!

EVE

Vengeance for Cain? Vengeance, by God's decree,
For Cain, Life's Captain, victor of his cause
In earth and heaven against God's legionaries?
Vengeance for Cain, for Cain the fratricide?
A seven-fold vengeance doomed by God's decree
On whomsoever shall slay the slayer of man?
Verily then the voice of God proclaims,
Obedient to the inexorable truth,
Not His resistless will but what must be!
And yet — why vengeance for the death of Cain?
Wherefore from all men and above all men
Shall Cain be saved?

CAIN

I am the torch-bearer!

EVE

Till now my tears have blinded me; at last
I see and know, — thou art the Son of Man,
Thou art the Saviour — and my son, my son!
Love and forgive me! for the blood of Abel
Rose, a red mist between thy soul and mine!
Now I am weak no more; I say to thee:
Go forth, go forth, lonely and godlike man!
My heart will follow tho' my feet must stay.
Yet in thy solitude shall there be a woman
To care for thee thro' the incessant days,

To lie beside thee in the desolate nights,
To love thee as thy soul shall love the truth!
In her thy generation shall conceive
Passionate daughters, strong and fierce-eyed sons
To lift the light and bear the labour of truth
Whereof the spark is mine, the fire is thine!
Men of thy seed shall scourge the face of God;
Women of her conception shall deride
The laws of men! Singly they come forever
To scare God in His heavenly palaces,
To shake the sleep of the lethargic world,
To wreck establishments and bring to scorn
Laws and obediences and cast
Wrathful derision on the creeds of peace!
The fire you bear invincibly shall pass,
Imperishably shall burn from hand to hand,
From age to age — no power can quench the flame
Flashed from the dawn of soul's eternity! —
And now — Go! Go! Leave me or else I die!
Go! while the power is in me, — lest I yield!

CAIN

Farewell! Woman, the voice of prophecy
Speaks in your mouth — the light shall never die.
I love you, love you with a measureless love!

EVE

Cain! — Cain!

CAIN

Farewell! My will and mine alone
Has made me outcast from the laws of men,
And from God's laws, and from the homes of men.
I am the man I am: no cause but this
Has cast me naked and lonely from the pale,
To wander, alien in the Academe,
Cursed and derided in the market-place,
Slandered and scourged before the shrines of God.
O I shall weary with all the woes of the world!
And when I shall lift up the immortal light
Like dawn in the dark places of men's souls,
All men shall hail it as a ruinous fire
Born for their world's destruction; they shall rise,
Nerved with ferocious fear, and hale me forth,
Seize me, traduce me, judge me, and condemn, —
And press the hemlock to my unshrinking lips
Or nail my scourged flesh naked to the cross!

EVE

Yet shall the great light live!

CAIN

It shall not die!
Farewell!

CAIN turns and moves away. The night is ended. On the remote edge of the world, under a line of dark clouds, the young dawn glows, tawny and splendid.

CAIN goes forth straight into the dawn. EVE watches him rapt, transfixed, haggard, agonized. His figure grows small in the distance. The dawn greatens. Suddenly from the tent is heard the voice of ADAM, just waking from sleep.

The voice of ADAM

Eve!

EVE shudders and slowly turns her eyes toward the tent. ADAM appears in the door.

ADAM

Eve! — where art thou?

EVE

with a great cry

I am woman!

Mother of men — and childless, childless, childless!

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09929 483 5